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"Immediately shutting the door upon her, Willie stood alone with his infuriated father."

Win and Wear. p. 84.

WIN AND WEAR.

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WIN AND WEAR

I.

The Rivals.

IN the crowded school-room of the village of Belden's Falls, a class of boys was called out to recite. The clock from the steeple of the church just by had long since struck the hour of eleven, and the careless, indolent way in which the scholars at their desks were turning over their dog-eared leaves, showed that their attention and interest were much more riveted upon that same steeple than upon their books. Even the class under the eye of a strict teacher, were more intent upon the expected chimes, than upon their recitation, when the attention of all

was suddenly arrested by a trial of skill between two of the boys. It was reciting the Rules of Syntax, from beginning to end, without misplacing or missing a single word.

The combatants were James Ashton, and Willie Sumner. James was a large, well-dressed boy of twelve. Willie was ten, quite small, and his patched clothes told both of neatness and poverty.

James had dark eyes and crisp black hair, curling all over his head. He had very red cheeks, and a pleasant, frank, intelligent look, which made every one call him a handsome boy. Willie had eyes blue as the summer sky, and almost as deep; light brown hair which scarcely waved over his forehead; and a thin, pale face, reminding one forcibly of some of those sweet angels which float half way between heaven and earth, in many of the pictures of the Madonna. James was the largest, and Willie the smallest boy in the class; this made the contest more noticeable.

There was to be a public examination in three weeks: this grammar lesson was the first of the reviews, and both the teacher and pupils were desirous that a good beginning should ensure a good ending. Every boy but James and Willie had failed already, but neither of these had so far missed one word. As they proceeded with their prompt and correct answers, the scene became very exciting—you could have heard a pin drop. The children's eyes followed the boys' voices, as if they contained a spell, and gradually flushed faces, and eager, half-parted lips, told of the intense sympathy which exists in the child world. "Twenty-first Rule, James!" said the teacher, Mr. Lane, in a voice scarcely less excited than James's own.

This rule had always been a difficult one to James. He had spent more time in committing it than on all the others, but when he closed his book and tried to repeat it, the words would get misplaced. He did not understand,

and had no clue by which to connect it. So "the relations, connections, and dependencies intended," arranged themselves according to any "but the best usages of language." As soon as his fears were realized, and he found the rule had been given him, he became confused, his eyes wandered quickly from Mr. Lane to Willie, and then back again, and the color rushed into his face.

Mr. Lane saw the trouble at once, and with the wish of helping him, said over again, slowly, "The Twenty-first General Rule."

"The different parts of a sentence," began James, "should be made to harmonize with each other, and should be so constructed"—several hands were raised at once; James stopped—he knew that he had missed.

"You have recited so finely," said Mr. Lane, "that you have deserved another trial; keep cool, and begin again."

James hesitated. "Yes! yes!" said a number of voices at once, "begin again—it's fair."

"No, it is not fair," said James, stoutly; "I missed as much as the other boys have, and I had rather not go on."

"You must—go ahead!" shouted the boys.

"Silence, boys!" said Mr. Lane. "James *has* missed. I think he is perfectly right and noble in his choice. Willie, can you repeat it?"

"Yes, sir," said Willie, hanging his head.

"Repeat it, then."

"I should rather begin here to-morrow, if you please, Mr. Lane," answered Willie.

"No, no, *now*," said the boys; the sense of justice fast succeeding their former generosity.

"I should prefer you would recite it to-day," said Mr. Lane, gently.

Willie immediately obeyed, and repeated it without a mistake.

"Now, boys," said Mr. Lane, addressing the class, "you may take your choice. Willie shall, if he is willing—I will not compel him to it—go on and finish these rules alone, or

wait until to-morrow, and try again with James."

"To-day! to-day!" answered the class.

"Willie, what do you say?" continued Mr. Lane. "By going on to-day, you run the risk of a failure; but it will be more fair to James. By stopping now, you will have a chance to review. You may do as you please."

"I will go on if you wish," said Willie.

"No, I do not *wish*. You shall do as you please. This is only fair to you."

"I will go on."

The school-room was again still. The children listened with almost breathless interest, as the soft, low tones of Willie's voice succeeded, without pause or hesitation, to the number of the rule called for by Mr. Lane; and when the last word of the last rule was said, the boys clapped and stamped, as if at some funny exhibition. To his great credit be it told, that no one exhibited truer pleasure than James. Mr. Lane glanced from him to

Willie with an expression of greater satisfaction than had been called forth even by the perfect recitation. "They are noble boys," he thought; "God help me to make men of them!"

Twelve long loud strokes had that belfry bell sent forth, but not a child in school had noticed them. They were therefore not a little surprised when, with a word of apology for having detained them beyond school-hours they were dismissed.

What a noisy set they were! as, having all quietly passed the threshold, they broke forth into the expression of their pent-up feelings.

"Hurra for Willie Sumner! Three cheers for Billy! Wells' Grammar for ever! and the everlasting rules of syntax! Here's to the nominative, possessive, and objective, and Willie! Willie! Three cheers for the young grammarian! Willie Wells for ever!" "A new name! a name!" shouted the girls, in shriller tones than the boys; "Willie Wells; not Willie Sumner any longer!"

Poor little Willie! It was a clear, cold winter morning. The snow lay white and deep, all over the ground. The long, pendent icicles from the roof of the school-house, over their heads, told that it had been long since the sun had exerted the power of his warm beams; and the child had left the hot school-room, shivering with excitement. Now the piercing air seemed as if it struck through his thin garment with actual blows; and, amid the general glee and excitement, he stood pale, trembling, and silent.

"Let us take the largest sled, and all tackle on for horses, and drag Willie home," proposed a stout, stupid boy, who could only comprehend that a lesson had been recited which, for some reason, had given pleasure.

"Agreed! agreed! James Ashton's sled is the best one. Come! hand on, Jem."

"All ready," answered James, as he drew his sled directly in front of Willie. "Step on, Willie; we can't *chair you*, as they do the boys in Eton; but we will *sled* you."

Willie stepped back. "I had rather walk, thank you, James," he said. "I will help draw you; jump on yourself."

"No, no! Willie Wells or no one," said the authoritative voice of Young America.

"Then no one," said James, who saw how pale and cold Willie was. "Let us change our fun, and try a coast. Willie can beat at grammar; see who will beat at sliding. Here, sir!" he continued, addressing Willie, "if you won't ride, catch hold and draw. Whoever reaches Brown's hill first, is the best fellow."

Boys, like men, follow a leader without question or comment; so away the whole crowd started, some few only stopping to seat their favorite little girls upon their sleds.

Other boys could beat our young students at play, if not at work; so it happened that James and Willie were not the "best fellows," but came last to the hill. Perhaps they stopped to talk upon the road; perhaps James, with his intuitive delicacy, saw that the quick-breath-

ing and trembling boy that held the rope with him had exhausted what little physical strength he had. At any rate, he seemed to have become the protector of his rival, and to care for him almost as if he had been the pretty sister of whom he was so fond, and whose clear, silvery laugh he could hear now, over and above that of all the other noisy group.

"There, Willie," he said, as they reached the hill, "you take my sled, and give Lina a ride; I am going down with little Tom Perkins; he has got a fast team there, and the hill is too steep for him alone: he will break his neck as sure as he tries it. Lina! Lina!" he called to his sister, "come! Willie Sumner is going to draw you; make haste."

Lina set her small tin-pail, which had contained her dinner, but was emptied at recess, down upon the snow, and, quite conscious of being the envy of the girls, as she was to ride with the hero of the day, lost no time in seating herself upon the sled behind Willie.

"Put your arms around me, and hold on tight," whispered Willie; "for we shall go like split." Lina obeyed silently. If the truth must be told, she had a slight feeling of awe as she approached the boy who had been victorious over James. James was so smart and so good,—everybody—her father and mother and everybody else—said so; what sort of a being must he be who was better than James? She looked earnestly into Willie's face. The boy saw that she was troubled, and whispered again,—

"Lina, I would have missed when James did, but I couldn't, you see, without doing what was not true. I am sorry, very sorry; indeed, you can't tell how badly I feel about it."

"James don't though," said Lina, looking at her brother; "he seems just as if he was glad you had beaten him."

"That is what troubles me most; he is so generous and good, that he ought to be first in every thing."

"I love him best," said Lina, simply.

"So do I," answered Willie, the tears coming into his eyes. "He is what I call a first-rate fellow. I believe," he continued, lowering his voice still more, "he is like George Washington when he was a boy. Don't you?"

"Yes, or like Jesus when he went up to the temple," added Lina, in the same tone.

"Oh! no, Lina, not like Jesus, for he was a sinless child, you know."

"So is James; he never does what mother tells him not to."

"But Jesus was—was different, I am very sure; though I do love James dearly."

"Well, then," said Lina, "say George Washington, though he cut his father's fruit-tree once with his little hatchet; and that I am sure James would not do."

Their further conversation was interrupted by the starting of the sled. Away it flew as if it were in close and intimate communion with its precious freight, and bounded over the

"Away flew the sled."

Win and Wear. p. 16.

glassy surface instinct with the life and joy of the young hearts who gave to it so warm a portion of their fresh, beating love. Beautiful "Snowbird!" it seemed to be bearing these children on its outspread wings, skimming along as gracefully as if it was in another and lighter element, and was in reality the very bird for whom it was named.

James passed them on their way down. He could only smile and nod, for he was holding fast on to little Tommy, and guiding his somewhat erratic "Comet," while with a skilful touch of his foot he sent the slight craft on, on, until it passed every competitor, and came first to the piece of ice which formed the goal. "Comet" always "beat" when James was upon it.

"Can't you get there next time as soon as James," whispered Lina, as if half ashamed of the request.

"No," said Willie, in the same tone—"Comet is faster than Snowbird, and James is stronger

and can steer better than I; but I will take Tom here and you shall go on Comet next time."

"I had rather stay here," said Lina, blushing; "I like Snowbird best. It is the prettiest name, don't you think so?"

A noble action, though it may not be pointed out, or recognized in words, will always exert a strong and active influence. No one had said, "James Ashton is a generous, noble boy. See, he has risen above all envy or jealousy, he rejoices in the success of his rival;" but the boys all *felt* it. They knew that they had that day been taught a lesson, more impressively than by any other way. There was not one among them, who would not have blushed to have done anything mean or unkind: the whole tone of feeling and action was elevated, by the goodness and kindness of their handsome playfellow; and as time after time they watched his little sled shoot first upon the opposite bank, they cheered and clapped him with as

much enthusiasm as they had, a half hour before, the successful grammarian.

Boys are quick to see and acknowledge merit, whether of the head or heart. There is no class of beings in the world, who more fully concur in the justice and truth of the old adage, *Win and Wear.*

II.

Willie's Home.

IT is not at all improbable that many mothers in Belden's Falls looked up and down the street several times for the truant children, whose dinner was waiting for them, before they made their appearance, and it would be quite amusing if we could know the different ways in which they were received; but as we cannot, we must be content to follow Willie, as, having left Lina and the sled at James Ashton's door, he turned off the main street to the lane leading to his father's house.

The house was quite out of the village,—a small, one story brown house, without a single thing to give it a homelike, or comfortable look. It had no yard, no barn or woodshed, no neat wood-pile. An old oak tree threw out its bare brawny arms over it,

as if it would fain do its best to shelter and protect it; and the cheerful snow piled itself up warmly and snugly above the loose foundation stones, crept even to the low bedroom window, and laid its white cheek against the cracked panes. A feeble blue flame curled up from the leaning chimney; it was very pale and flickering, and, as Willie's eye first fell upon it, with his mind and nerves in a state of unnatural excitement, he could not but think how much it seemed like his own life, anxious to ascend, yet faint, and falling back. "But see," he said aloud, "it does not fall to the ground; it only sinks a little, spreads out, and rises again: so can I,—I will not be discouraged; down, down, but up, up, again." Willie stopped: a sound came from the house, low, indistinct at first, like that of an animal who was growling preparatory to a spring, but increasing rapidly into a yell, at once human, and yet so inhuman, that no one unaccustomed to it could have imagined from what it could

have come. Willie knew it well—it was the shriek uttered by his little deaf and dumb sister, when angry, or suffering. He quickened his steps: there came another and another scream. Hastily pushing open the door, the boy's eyes fell upon a scene which, to the latest hour of his life, he will never forget. He seemed to take it all in, and comprehend it, at his first glance.

In the middle of the room his father stood, holding by her arm the deaf and dumb child, now shaking her violently, and now striking her with a large knotty stick which he had caught up from the pile of wood by the stove. Lotty, the child, writhed and shrieked between each blow, and the blood began to crimson her neck and hands as Willie entered. His mother was hurrying with the baby and his two years old brother out of the side door, to summon that assistance which she knew full well she was unable to give. A broken jug with its spilled contents told the whole story. Lotty

had unfortunately broken the article; her father had already taken too much of its contents, and now was following the penalty.

"Let her alone, father!" said Willie, attempting to step between them.

The child recognized him with a cry of joy, and held out her little bleeding hands towards him. "Let Lotty alone, father!" repeated Willie, more boldly, catching the stick as it was falling, and endeavoring to wrest it away.

"Out of the way," said his father, aiming at him the blow intended for Lotty.

"Stop, father! stop, or beat me, if you must any one."

"Beat you! that I will till I have pummelled you to powder." Still keeping tight hold of Lotty, the intoxicated father reeled after Willie, who, by a series of dexterous dodges not only escaped the blows, but drew his father nearer the door. Opening it, he pointed out of it to Lotty, and making a sudden and vigorous leap upon the arm by which she was held, he suc-

ceeded in loosening it, and the child sprang away. Immediately shutting the door upon her, Willie stood alone with his infuriated father, and for one instant the thought of sudden death flashed across him. "God help me, and keep me for my mother's sake," prayed the boy silently; and as the thought passed through his mind, a heavy blow almost deprived him of sense. For a moment he was unconscious of what was passing around him. When he recovered, his father was sitting down in a chair, the stick had dropped from his hand, and he was gazing sullenly at him.

The force of that last blow had partially sobered him, or God had spoken to him in one of those flashes of reason, which sometimes come athwart the bewildered mind. He saw blood—he knew it was from his son's head; and he knew further, that in some way he had been the cause of it. Poor man! he had "put an enemy into his mouth to steal away his brains;" he had no power of knowing exactly

what had taken place any more than the stick of wood which had fallen from his hand; he looked as vacantly at his own child, as if he had never known him; he was not sufficiently conscious to be then sorry for what he had done.

Willie moved softly to the fire; the blood was trickling slowly down his face, but he did not feel it. There was a ringing sound in his ears, and the objects in the room moved up and down, as if they were all going out of the door. He cowered down close to the stove; he was cold, very cold, and yet great drops of perspiration were mingling with the blood. He covered his face with both his hands. How long he sat there he could never tell; he was first aroused by a gentle hand lifting him up.

"Willie," his mother said, "are you much hurt? speak to me, my boy."

"No, mother," said he, instantly rousing himself; "I am not hurt at all, only I was cold and tired, and sat down to rest."

With some fresh water his mother washed

away the dried blood, and, parting his fair hair from off his forehead, kissed him. "Poor Willie!" she said, tenderly, "mother is very sorry for her boy."

"Where is Lotty?" said Willie, starting up.

"Softly," said his mother, pointing to his father, who with his head upon the table was sleeping soundly—"I thought you had hidden her away."

"No, I put her out of the door; where can she be? I will go and see!"

As he tried to stand, he reeled—the blow had been very severe; he had not quite recovered. His mother led him to the door; she knew the fresh air would restore him, and so it did, though it cut him through and through almost like a knife. Confused as he was, he began to call "Lotty!" forgetting that she could not hear; but, suddenly recollecting, he looked around for her in every direction. There was no object near, by which she could conceal herself. Up and down, as far as he could see,

lay the cold snow, with hardly a tree or shrub to break its glittering surface. "Lotty! Lotty!" he called again, alarmed at the stillness which seemed to have fallen over every thing, and anxious to break it, if it was so uselessly. "Lotty! where are you? Come home; there is no danger now."

Not a sound in reply. Hesitating for an instant which way to turn, he decided at last that Lotty was accustomed to go to the village, when allowed to go out at all, and thither he turned to follow her. As he went on, he remembered how wholly unprotected she was—not the slightest covering, and the blood on her neck and hands.

"She will die—she will die," he screamed, as he rapidly repeated all these circumstances to himself; and, as if new life was given to him by the thought, he almost flew along the road to the nearest house. As he approached it, a new terror seized the boy.

So far, during his father's downward course,

with the self-respect inherent to delicate minds, his mother and himself had taken every pains to conceal both his conduct and their own sufferings from their neighbors. Never before had he so far forgotten himself as to inflict personal violence upon them; and now, by to-day's outrage, the whole secret must be revealed. Years of patient endurance were all in vain; and this confession, forced out by his own and Lotty's looks, oh! the proud, sensitive child felt that he would rather die than make. He could have borne any trial save this; but poor, helpless Lotty! he could not let her suffer. No one can ever know the amount of courage which it required for Willie to knock at this neighbor's door. A schoolmate opened it; he noticed nothing unusual in Willie's looks—so the boy was almost relieved to hear him say that Lotty had not been there, or passed by that way, for he had been out on the street until that very minute, having come in to warm himself.

Willie retraced his steps; he must consult with his mother. Every part of his progress home was marked with such thoughts and resolutions as had never been his before. He had not a vestige of the ambition which so few hours before had made him liken himself to the curling smoke. He felt many years older, as if upon him, a boy of ten, had suddenly devolved the care of his mother, his deaf and dumb sister, his baby sister, and even Warren, though he was the sturdiest of them all. "I will consult with mother." These few words told of the commencement of a new epoch in the child's life. They seemed to put childhood behind him, and to make him at once, however prematurely, a man,—so Willie thought; and reverently, as if starting back from this shadow of coming manhood, he closed his eyes, and repeated again that short prayer, so familiar to the troubled heart—"God help me."

Mrs. Sumner was more alarmed than Willie, when she saw him returning without Lotty.

From her birth the child had been to her such a constant source of care and anxiety, that the dread of an accident had become almost instinctive, and the absence of Lotty, even for a few moments from her sight, was always accompanied by sad forebodings. When she left the house to secure the safety of her other children, she had trusted to the gentleness which, after the first burst of passion, had never failed to come to the father for this stricken one, to secure Lotty from any real injury; and this she knew, in his infuriated state, she could not rely upon for her other children, should any thing occur to divert his attention from her to them. The child had never been far from home, and a constitutional timidity aided her mother in keeping her, even in the most tempting summer-time, within sight of the house; therefore Mrs. Sumner felt sure her ignorance of the roads would prevent her going to any distance, and, putting her baby into bed, with a trembling dread as to what might hap-

pen to the other children during her absence, she prepared hastily to go with Willie. They looked behind every object that rose above the surface of the ground; even a little bank of snow, which could scarcely have concealed the child, was carefully searched. And as the distance from home increased, and all was silent and desolate, Willie drew nearer to his mother, and his courage died away with every fresh failure. They had both hoped that Lotty had secreted herself in the pine woods which was a mile before them, on the same road. How much she must have suffered from the cold, in order to reach this place, they dared not think. On, on they went,—Lotty's mother, with the image of a perishing child beckoning her forward, and the two little ones, left to the mercy of an intoxicated father, calling her back.

That was a weary mile to the woods. Again and again they searched, in the half-beaten snow road, for the print of the child's foot; but the hard surface retained no mark, and if they

were wrong in the direction they had taken, they had not at least the misery of continually knowing it. How drearily those old pines groaned and shivered as they approached them! It seemed to the mother like a wail for her lost child; and, as they left the path, and, taking opposite directions, began to look behind every tree and shrub, the cracking of the stiffened limbs and the fall of a dried cone heavily upon the snow made them often stop, and call to each other with a thrill of joy, sure that the lost was found! A short circuit brought them out about a quarter of a mile deeper into the woods together; and, with a calmness which Willie never forgot, his mother told him she "could not any longer remain away from home, and that he had better go to the village for help."

"Then I must tell them of father," said Willie, dropping his head; "every one will ask how Lotty came away from home."

"Do your duty, my boy," said his mother,

gently, "and trust God with the rest. Tell the truth, if you are asked; it is no longer in our power to shield your father."

Quickly retracing her steps, Mrs. Sumner almost feared to enter the house. It was still as death as she opened the door, but one look reassured her. Still leaning on his arms at the table, her husband slept soundly, and the children had also both fallen asleep. God had heard her prayer, and had watched over the helpless.

Willie, left alone, became almost frantic,—he felt so sure that Lotty would die before he could go to the village and return. And then, to whom should he go? His mother had not said: he must decide for himself. It is no wonder that the first person he thought of was James Ashton;—but James was only a boy; what could he do? He would help him in some way, he felt sure; so, without any further hesitation, he started on a run for Mr. Ashton's.

Before he reached the village he came in sight of a boy dragging his sled. Willie's first impulse was to turn away to avoid the meeting, but that he could not do without losing time. No one who has not been similarly tried can tell what an effort of moral courage it required tc make this first confession, for he had no idea that his bruised face and stained coat would escape the notice of the boy. One moment he wavered, and his troubled heart sent forth a cry of agony, which God was listening to hear. "Honor thy father." Long ago God had commanded it, and now He saw, and knew, that this struggle in the child was because he could not "honor" his father as he wished. It is difficult for us to realize how constantly God is with us; how, looking beyond what we say, or what perhaps our lips refuse to utter, He reads deep in our hearts all those thoughts and feelings which no human eye has ever discerned. Willie hardly thought of God at this moment;—he thought of his father, as he

was years ago; he had an indescribable longing to keep from the knowledge of every one how he erred, how cruel and wicked he had become; but he walked steadily on, and, as he came nearer the boy, he heard his own name shouted loudly. "Willie! Willie Sumner! Come here, quick. You don't know what I have found!"

He recognized the voice as James's, and following at once came another sound: never had there been so much music in it before; it was Lotty's shrill voice, uttering, in her own unintelligible language, her glad welcome.

Seated upon James's sled, that same Snowbird, sat Lotty, so nicely and warmly wrapped up in some of Lina's clothes, that, notwithstanding the voice, Willie had to peep several times under the hood to be sure the bright, happy face was indeed that of his deaf and dumb sister.

A pair of warm red mittens covered her hands. She held up one for Willie to admire

its bright color; and then the other hand, with a look of infinite childish delight, to show a large slice of cake with which Mrs. Ashton had provided her. The sight of the food reminded Willie that he had eaten nothing since morning. He involuntarily made a movement to break a piece from off it, for his long, cold walk had given him a keen appetite, although he had not had time to think of it before. Lotty saw it, and eagerly held it out to him; but Willie, remembering himself, kissed his hand to her,—his usual way of thanking her,—and resolutely turned from the tempting morsel.

Probably more of Mr. Sumner's real situation was known to the villagers than his own family were aware,—for, to Willie's inexpressible relief, James made no inquiries; he only said, "that his father had met Lotty on the road to Chelten, and had taken her into his sleigh and brought her to his mother. His mother, knowing that Mrs. Sumner would be anxious about her, had only kept her long enough to

warm her and put some of Lina's clothes on her; that Lotty had been a very good child, had not cried at all when his mother washed her, though—though," James was going to say, "though the blood had been very stiffly congealed by the long exposure to the cold;" but his quick feelings told him that it was better not to mention the injury, so he finished his sentence with, "though she was very cold indeed."

Lotty's eye watched the expression of the boy's face very intently, as they stood talking together. She seemed hardly to know whether she had done right or wrong, for God had given to this afflicted child a keen sensibility to the moral value of an act, which, after all, was destined to be a surer guide to her than the light of revelation, and the constant line upon line and precept upon precept, are to many who can both hear and speak.

She watched the shade steal off from Willie's face; she saw a real smile light it up; and then once more she uttered that strange, wild shout

of joy, and, jumping off from the sled, insisted upon putting all her slice of cake into the hands of the hungry boy.

"Lotty brought that for you," said James, the tears actually coming into his eyes as he saw Willie striving to keep back the hunger which the food again made almost uncontrollable. "Mother gave her a nice lunch; she ate all she could—then mother sent this to you."

"Thank you," said Willie, breaking off a little piece, and carrying it to his mouth as confidently as if he were suddenly placed at a table with a princess; "the truth is, I am very hungry, for I have not eaten a mouthful since long before daylight this morning, and I could eat a nail."

"Try an apple first, then," said James, taking a large, rosy-cheeked one from his pocket. "Here is a pair of them for you. I put in this very one, thinking you might like to have it at recess; it's more juicy than a nail, at least."

When Lotty saw the apples, and Willie

really eating, first a mouthful of one, and then a mouthful of the cake, she uttered a series of those joyful sounds, and ended by clapping her hands.

"That's her way," said Willie, "when she is too happy to laugh. What a darling she is. Do you know, James? I think I love her a hundred times better than I should if she could talk. She says so much without ever speaking a word."

James looked at her animated face with almost as much pleasure as Willie. He had never seen so much of her before. Children generally have a species of awe for one upon whom God has lain His hand, which keeps them from a very intimate approach; and this deaf and dumb child, with her eager, piercing look, seemed almost to him like an angel whom God had sent to watch, and report to Him how other children behaved. She had never appeared so much like a human child to him as she did now, and he did not wonder that Willie loved her.

It must not be supposed that the boys stood still while Willie ate his opportune luncheon; they drew the sled, upon which Lotty had seated herself again, as fast as they could walk, towards her home. And some time before they reached it, Mrs. Sumner, to her inexpressible relief, saw them, and divined the whole.

James did not quite like to approach very near the house, so, as they came to a turn in the road, he said, "Now, Willie, if you will lead Lotty home, I will run to school. I shall just have time, if I am quick."

How thoughtful James was! Willie did not say so; but this gentle kindness of the rich boy was one of the beautiful gifts of God, which He sent to compensate the child for the sufferings which must attend his lot. Willie did not think of all this; James did not even know it. But when the boys parted, James carried with him the buoyant, happy feelings which always remain after having done a kind thing kindly; and Willie went back to his

desolate home with more courage, and more strength to endure.

He could not go to school that afternoon. He felt tired, and almost sick; and besides, he began to find—little frail child that he was!—that his presence was a protection to his mother. He hardly remembered the examination, and the long review lesson in spelling and arithmetic, which was to come off this afternoon. He had much to do at home: and, after all, it is the performance of a duty, well, cheerfully, thoroughly, even if this duty is not the most desirable—or if, by many plausible excuses, another could be made to take its place;—still, as there can be but one right thing required of us at a time, it is attention to this which never fails to bring its reward. This is the way, and the only way, to *win* the laurel; and this, too, is the only course by which we can fit ourselves so to *wear* it, that we can feel sure it is ours, and be secure from the envy or ill will which is so often the accom-

panniment of success, because others dispute our claim as founded not in right, but originating for the most part in some species of fraud or deception. Willie was, at present, in no danger of this.

III.

The Examination.

THE school in Belden's Falls occupied a position midway between a district, and a high school. That is, much pains was taken to secure competent teachers, and some boys had gone from there directly to college.

This advance beyond common schools was owing mainly to the exertions of Mr. Ashton, who, not being able to support a teacher exclusively for his own children, and yet unwilling to send them, young as they were, away from home, did the best thing he could—paid a larger sum than any one else toward the support of the school—and secured a teacher entirely competent. Squire Ashton, as the villagers called him, was the great man of the place. He was not a lawyer, as his title would imply, but was engaged in extensive manufac-

turing interests; and had come to Belden's Falls to take advantage of a fine water-power, which accidentally came to his knowledge. It was all an experiment; but as he was one of those men who unite goodness and integrity with activity and sound business capacity, his residence among them began soon to show itself in the thrift and increasing intelligence of the towns-people. They had formerly preaching only occasionally in their school-house. One of the first things Mr. Ashton did, after selecting the site for his mill, was to choose one for a church, and the two buildings went up almost stone by stone.

"God would, for sartin, bless that ere man," old Mrs. Thomson said, "for he sarved Him, as well as mammon; and this ere mill would stand and prosper as long as the airth lasted, for it had the blessing."

It seemed as if the good lady's prediction was literally fulfilled; for everything Mr. Ashton touched, prospered. He found the

heart of the people, and they served him faithfully. At the date of our story there were two large mills in successful operation. Small, neat houses had been built, until the population had doubled to fill them. Nice new stores carried on quite an enterprising competition. The minister—"the best man the world ever saw," his people said—had a pretty little parsonage, a competent support, and a loving and attentive people. The old school-house had long since been moved away, and a neat new building was always crowded with its young occupants. So much interest was felt in it, that the "Examination" was considered the event of the year, and the preparation for it a matter of the greatest importance. It very soon became rumored about that Willie Sumner was likely to prove the best scholar for this year; and the intelligence was received with much pleasure, for the whole tone of thought and feeling in the town had become elevated in proportion as it came under the immediate

influence of Mr. Ashton. And people, who had known Willie's parents in the days of their prosperity, were glad of anything which could tend to alleviate their situation now.

Mr. Sumner had come to settle in Belden's Falls fifteen years ago; he had married the youngest child of their old minister. She had been an only and a very darling child, and seemed, in her gentle loveliness, to belong to the whole town. Mr. Sumner was fine-looking, gentlemanly, and talented. Every one thought it a good match—no wonder the young lady did herself, for surely, never was promise given of greater happiness. But Mr. Sumner was active, and the people in Belden's Falls were not quarrelsome; there was very little for him to do there. He gradually became idle,—and idleness, in man or boy, is the root of all evil. Bad habits followed naturally, and, going from bad to worse, business, what little he had, failed. Then came straitened circumstances, poverty, and at last absolute want.

Mr. Ashton extended his helping hand to him, and tried to save him; but what, beside the grace of God, can arrest a person who has not the strength to save himself?

Mr. Sumner moved out from the village. He rapidly lost his self-respect, and now did nothing but an occasional piece of law business, which Mr. Ashton pressed upon him in order that his family might not perish, or come upon the town. "Ah! God's hand is upon them," the good villagers said. "We are glad our worthy old minister has gone to his rest; it would well-nigh have broken his heart to see this lamb of his flock suffering so, and that deaf and dumb child too. It never rains but it pours, and the mother was a good little thing; we all remember her when she was as sweet as a rose."

It was therefore now a species of compensation, over which every one rejoiced, to have Willie doing so well; and many a mother felt that she could give up that *first* place for her

own boy with real pleasure, if it only might come to Willie Sumner.

Willie had no thoughts of the victory. He had studied well, because his mother had always taught him to do what he did with his whole heart; and then, his heart was in his books, for he often felt sure that he had rather read, and get a good hard lesson, than do any thing else in the world. Perhaps he might have been more playful if he had had a happier life; but now, care and sorrow had been his companions from his cradle, and it is hard for even a child to sport with such playfellows.

He was a quiet, gentle, sad little boy, but all his schoolfellows loved him. He was modest and retiring; and, if he were at the head of his class, put on no airs of superiority or self-importance. There was another reason why Willie was generally beloved: his mates did not know it; and they would, many of them, scarcely have comprehended it if they had.

His mother had always said to him, since his earliest remembrance, "My son, God is not going to give you many good things in this life; you must begin early to lay up for yourself treasures in another, and then it will be of very little importance what happens to you here." She not only gave Willie this general direction, but she strove to put it for him into practical, every-day use. In what manner she did this the progress of our story will show. She had brought away from her Christian home a Christian heart; if it had not been for this, it seemed to her that she should have prayed to lay down her burdens long ago. Perhaps there was not in Belden's Falls a parent who felt less solicitude for Willie's success at the coming examination than she did herself. So often the praise which is so lavishly bestowed at such a time is apt to result in injury to the child, that she dreaded more than she coveted it. "Keep my precious boy from temptation," was her daily prayer.

It was a bright sparkling day when the bell from the meeting-house announced to the people that the examination was to take place. There was no room for it in the school-house—every seat was occupied by scholars. Even the church was crowded; and many a little heart beat fast, as, dressed in holiday attire, the solemnity and awe belonging to the church were added to the dread of speaking where there were so many to hear, and the minister and Mr. Ashton, too!

Many small feet made divers paths out of the beaten road as they flew along, to see "how it would seem" in that big church; and little red fingers, that had never approached the consecrated stove, held themselves close up to it now, with a kind of wonder at finding it emitted precisely the same kind of heat which theirs did at home, and in due time actually restored warmth and circulation.

Willie's mother had, with much care and labor, prepared him a new suit, or rather an

old suit turned, and made "as good as new." Willie surveyed it with great satisfaction. He, boy as he was, had cast many an anxious thought to the patches on his clothes: he loved dearly to be neat and clean; he sometimes thought he loved James Ashton better for his trim, stylish clothes. He was perfectly familiar with every style of button that adorned them. There was a propriety and elegance in good clothes, which suited the delicacy and refinement of the boy's natural taste. He could not be said positively to suffer from his own shabby condition, but he regarded it as a form of trial, and used often, in his simple boy-prayers, to ask God to take away his proud heart, and make him willing to bear cheerfully precisely the lot which He had seen best to appoint him. This new suit of clothes, coming so unexpectedly—how gratefully it made his heart beat! Not a child among all those neatly-dressed children, to whom their new clothes gave one half the real pleasure! Per-

haps there was not another who, after being all ready to go, stole softly to his chamber, and, kneeling down by the side of his bed, with tears starting from his eyes, thanked God for being so very kind to him, and asked for ability to do well at school, and help to make, by and by, a good, useful man.

Mrs. Sumner stood at the door, and watched her boy until he was lost to her sight; then, commending him to God, she felt willing to leave him there. Willie was the only child whose parents were not present; it may be, the only one who went thither followed by his mother's prayer. What an unusual sound that hum of children's voices was, as he opened the large outer-door! and how eagerly they welcomed him!—any one might have seen that Willie was a favorite. They immediately made a place for him on the bench nearest the stove. It was by Lina; and as Willie took it, Lina whispered to him—"What a pretty new coat that is, Willie; you look as neat as a pin."

Mr. Lane soon called the children to order; their several seats were given them, and every pains was taken, in the arrangement, to make the examination as impartial as possible.

At the appointed hour the friends began to arrive. James Ashton and Benjamin True acted as ushers. Every thing was quiet and orderly; for all had been arranged beforehand, and this saves confusion at any time. "Singing, by the choir!" and sweet singing it was, for who ever heard an unmusical child's voice, unless it was when the voice was raised in anger? Then the clergyman offered a prayer; and then the trembling little scholars were called upon to make their first essay. This was not one of Willie's classes. He was glad, for he was more timid than most children, and felt a shy desire to become familiar with the looks of the audience before he spoke. All the faces appeared kind, happy, and pleased; he gradually began to lose his dread of them, and when his turn came, was in perfect read-

iness. There was a slight movement among the spectators as he took his place upon the stage. He was now only to take part in a dialogue; and as it was in itself a sprightly thing, the boys entered fully into the spirit of it, and did admirably by forgetting that it was not a reality. After this came the examination in arithmetic. Willie knew that he understood it thoroughly, as far as he had gone, therefore performed his part perfectly; so did James Ashton, and two others: the only difference was, that Willie was so small and delicate, the listeners would not make up their minds to expect as much from him.

"I never heard a better recitation," said Mr. Ashton, as the class took their seats. "Mr. Lane, your scholars do you much credit."

Other classes were equally satisfactory. It was now to that spelling-match to which all looked forward with such interest; that, alone, must decide the fate of the day.

The school was equally divided into two

parts, both for number and scholarship. They were arranged, at first, according to ages, but were to go up, or down, as they should fail or succeed. The words were given by each child to his opposite in the other class, and no one had interfered in the selection of the words; indeed, Mr. Lane did not know what they were.

In this arrangement James Ashton came very near the head, and Willie very near the foot of the contending parties. Willie's class felt troubled, and many sly whispers expressed the wish that he would go up.

"He will get there fast enough," said one of the boys; "let him alone!"

It was an equal division, and the words flew from side to side like balls of fire, carrying with them smiles and nods, and half-moving lips longing to tell, for fear the speller should make a mistake. But after a few minutes the mistakes began to come, and Willie made a few moves towards the head; so did James.

But that long row above Willie!—why, as he tried to look up, it almost seemed to him as if he could hardly number the little feet that stood so stoutly ranged above him. The more difficult the words, the better the children spelled them: the truth was, they had fully prepared themselves on such words as "Nebuchadnezzar," and "phthisic," and were not to be caught. At length, a boy on James's side gave out the word "necessary." The child to whom it was given, failed; so did the next, and the next, until a general panic seemed about to take place.

"Keep cool," said Mr. Lane, pleasantly; "any one of you who have missed that word would be able, by this time, I have not a doubt, to spell it correctly. Don't be afraid of the Ss—they won't hurt you if you get enough of them!"

Everybody laughed at the number which the next child used,—"nessessary," she said out, very bravely.

"Not quite, Miss Emma—you are a little too lavish ; be careful the next."

It was in vain ; down, down it went—the last few above Willie hardly daring to make the effort aloud.

Now for Willie : it would be no wonder if the boy had lost the right way among so many wrong ; but no—there it is, spelt loudly, clearly, and correctly. How the children on both sides clapped !—even the spectators could hardly restrain the same expression of sympathy. Mr. Lane looked troubled, and soon all was still again.

In the changes of the class Lina was opposite Willie. She had stood her ground, had never missed : and now it was Willie's turn to give her the word.

" Conscience," said Willie, in his confusion, hardly being aware to whom he was giving the word.

Lina attempted it,—but the child was excited with the success of Willie ; she was thinking

much more of him, than of her word; she hesitated, and Willie saw who was his antagonist. He immediately held up his hand.

"Mr. Lane! if you please, may I give another word? that is too hard for such a little girl."

"Not fair—not fair," said several voices.

"You hear, Willie—the children decide for me. They say it would not be fair."

"But she is so young," persisted Willie.

"She has not missed yet, if she is young," said Mr. Lane, encouragingly. "'Conscience,' Lina—don't be frightened; show Willie you are no baby."

But Lina had not recovered herself,—indeed she had had little chance, with the attention of the whole school so directed towards her. She fairly missed the word, and lost her place. But as she went down, with a generosity like her brother's, she whispered to Willie—"Never mind, Willie; you did not mean to make me miss,—you could not help it—don't care about it now."

But Willie did care. It seemed to him that, excited by his own success, he had been thoughtless and careless. He would rather at that instant have put Lina back in her place, then gone to the head of his side himself. But he saw there was no help for it now; so he tried to forget it in the excitement of the scene. All the time, however, instead of watching the progress of the words, he was watching Lina,—longing to say to her how sorry he was, and how unpleasantly he felt. He almost missed his next word,—really the whole class gave him up, when they saw how he wavered,—but he recovered himself; and as Lina seemed not cast down by her failure, his interest began to revive in the result.

James had almost reached the head; but there was a formidable array of bright boots between Willie and that goal. He did not even hope to reach it; but he felt so glad to see James mounting so fast, that it quite counterbalanced his grief at Lina's failure,

particularly as he saw how pleased she looked at every fresh success of his own.

The trial was long,—there were so many children,—but at last the younger grew tired; and Mr. Lane began to dismiss those who had missed three times, to their seats. In this way he soon reduced his number, until only four remained on either side,—James and Willie among them. As the number lessened, the excitement increased. One of the four missed,—then another; now no one remained but Willie and James. Who, as they saw the affectionate looks which they cast toward each other, would have suspected that they were rivals? Certainly there was no rivalry in their hearts; and they would probably have given to each other such easy words, that the children who had taken their seats would hardly have felt that the game was continued fairly: but Mr. Lane took the matter into his own hands, and himself gave out the spelling. Every one thought it most impartially done;

but the clock struck twelve, and the regular country people began to look at its hands just as often as at the combatants: still neither of them missed.

"You see, gentlemen and ladies," said Mr. Lane, stopping soon after twelve, "the game seems to be a drawn one. I *might* spell these boys on until night without their missing, and they *may* fail on the very next trial; I hardly know what to do."

"Give them," said Mr. Ashton, "six more words apiece, and then stop."

So it was. Six more words were quickly and correctly spelt, and the boys were dismissed; but before James took his seat, he held up his hand. He evidently had something he wished very much to say. Mr. Lane gave him leave.

"I think, Mr. Lane," he said, cheerfully, "there is no doubt who has been conqueror. I was more than half way up, on account of my being older than Willie; and as he

made his way from the foot nearly, it is only fair to say that he has done the best. Don't you see, Mr. Lane, how plain it is?

"There *is* something in what you say, most certainly, James," said Mr. Lane, his eye sparkling with pleasure. "You had the advantage in the start; but if *you* had been last, you would quite as likely have ended at the head."

"There would have been a great many more chances for my not being there," continued James, "and at any rate, everybody must see that it is not quite fair, for Willie has in truth done better than I have."

"It is difficult, I acknowledge, to decide," said Mr. Lane. "I will therefore pass the decision of the case from myself, to our minister and Mr. Ashton, who, although he is your own father, will, we all feel sure, be as impartial toward you, as toward Willie."

"Let me speak first," said Willie, without waiting for the form of raising his hand. "I

almost missed once. However far down I may have been in my class, this more than makes up. James never even hesitated. It seems to me there is no doubt who has done best."

A murmur of pleasure passed through the house, like a ray of sunshine; and the minister and Mr. Ashton, with faces as radiant as the others, stepped aside to consult together a few minutes. Mr. Ross, the minister, was evidently congratulating James's father on the noble behavior of his son; for Mr. Ashton's eyes sought him out, and rested on him for an instant with a peculiar fondness. They however quickly came to their decision. They thought Willie right. His hesitation had counterbalanced James's position. They thought the boys equally deserving of praise. And so they were all dismissed and returned home, all but the children who were to stay at noon; and they soon gathered around the stove, while they devoured the contents of their little tin-pails, eagerly discussing the events of the morning.

One child peeped into Willie's pail. "Why," said she, pityingly, "you have only a piece of bread, no cake, or pie, or even apple; here, take half of mine;" and then other hands drew out their choicest bits, and "Here, Willie, take mine, please do, mine is the best," was repeated by many eager voices. Willie refused them all. He was accustomed to plain fare; and, moreover, he felt tired, very tired, and longed to hide away somewhere and go to sleep.

The afternoon exercises were very similar to the morning, only much shorter; and, when all was over, Mr. Ashton, on behalf of the school committee, made a short address to the assembly. He said he had attended many examinations, but never one where everything had proceeded with such perfect order and fairness; that it was unrivalled for the promptness and accuracy of its recitations. It had been, in every respect, highly creditable to both teacher and scholar.

Mr. Ross said he could not forbear alluding to the behavior of the two boys, James Ashton and William Sumner. He did not believe in flattering either parents or children, but he must say he thought they had set an example of true manliness, which it would be well for all, whether old or young, to imitate. He should not go into particulars; there were some things which were weakened by being too accurately defined. He was sure the audience understood him perfectly. He would only repeat the adage which, when he was a schoolboy himself, he had so often written in his copy book, "*Win and Wear.*" He trusted his hearers would all make the practical application for themselves.

James and Willie were the only two among the whole who did not perfectly understand him, though Willie wondered much over it as he ran home, glad the examination was over, glad, too, of a vacation in which he might help his mother.

IV.

Plans for Willie.

"SOMETHING must be done for that boy," said Mr. Ashton to his wife, the night after the examination. I wish I knew just what would be right and best."

"What boy?" said Mrs. Ashton, looking up from her work, and thinking only of James.

"Why, Willie Sumner, to be sure. There is promise in that child. You should have heard him recite to-day. James, with the advantages and care he has had, was not quite his equal; and Willie may have been said to have made himself. Only think what a home he has! I have no doubt, if the truth were known, we should find there was often positive suffering there, both from want of food and from personal abuse."

"Yes," answered Mrs. Ashton, whose heart

was as kind and tender as her husband's; "I can never forget how that poor deaf and dumb child looked that day you brought her home. After I have been to see our own children all tucked up so nice and warm at night, and looking so rosy and happy, I cannot sleep for thoughts of those little things there. I am really afraid their father will kill them, sometime. What a brute he is!"

"Yes, I suppose no one but God can ever know how much bitterness is mingled every day in this wife's cup. I have no doubt she suffers, really suffers more in one week than many of the rest of us shall in our lifetime; and yet, how little she seems to any of us to need this discipline! Surely, God's ways are not our ways."

"Nor His thoughts our thoughts," added Mrs. Ashton. "I am often struck, when events look as inexplicable as this does, with the different manner in which God *thinks* of the same thing. But about Willie: I do wish we

could do something that would really help him. He ought to have an education. What a man he might make!"

"And *must* make, with God's blessing," said Mr. Ashton. "But there is one thing in the way. Willie is precisely that kind of boy who can only be helped by being allowed to help himself. I mean, that he would not accept money which he had never earned. Nor do I believe you could by any inducement tempt him away from home, so long as he thought his being there was a comfort or protection to his mother."

"Protection! what possible protection could such a boy be against a drunken father?"

"More than it would seem. There is a certain manliness about the little fellow which you see affects even me. I should not like to offer him money unless I could find a good excuse for doing so."

"You are the very person to help him. You have so much delicacy yourself, that you would

never wound him. Rich people are very apt to forget that the poor have feelings. For my part, I am constantly becoming more and more sure that the reason why there is so little real gratitude in the world is, because so much is demanded, because the needy know that the rich give only a very small part of their worldly substance, and require in return what is far more precious than silver and gold. You are an exception; you always give as if you were receiving the favor."

"Ah! my wife," said Mr. Ashton, his voice trembling, "it is because I have found how much more blessed it is to give than to receive. I always feel, when I am allowed to do any little thing, as if God were giving me a great blessing."

The tears came into Mrs. Ashton's eyes. "No wonder," she said, "our boy is so good, with such a father!"

"You and I always end our conversations by saying very pleasant things to each other,"

said Mr. Ashton, smiling; "but I don't know that it brings us any nearer the object."

"Oh! to be sure, helping Willie! Well, what will you do? I am ready for any thing."

"He is now ten years old, but if he remains at home, his father will be growing worse and worse; and by and by this life will destroy all his love of books, and he will be lost."

These worthy people discussed this difficult question until late at night, and the result of the conversation will be made manifest to our readers as they proceed with the story.

Early the next morning Mr. Ashton went to Mr. Sumner's house; but, early as it was, the jug was already in his hand, and he was about leaving the house to pawn his last book for liquor.

"Just in time, I see," said Mr. Ashton, cheerfully. "I have a little business I should like to have you do for me, and I should be sorry to have been too late. Come, suppose you step up to the mill with me. It may prove

something of a job; but I hardly like to drive over to Rowley for a lawyer, when we have such a good one at home."

Mr. Sumner made several awkward attempts to conceal his jug. It was the first symptom of shame he had evinced for months, and Mr. Ashton, looking away, gave him the opportunity. This done, Mr. Ashton began a pleasant conversation with him, speaking from time to time to Mrs. Sumner, who, divided between fear and pleasure, hardly knew what answers she made.

At length Mr. Ashton glided entirely into the business affair; and she was content, as she saw by her husband's clear and concise answers, that he not only comprehended, but was interested in the matter.

Willie came in from splitting his wood, with very rosy cheeks. He was surprised to see Mr. Ashton and his father talking so earnestly together, and would have stolen out again; but Mr. Ashton saw and stopped him.

"Ah, Willie! good-morning; so the success of yesterday did not make you forget your mother's wood. I am glad of it. I have heard you chopping away like a hero ever since I have been here. Which do you love best, work, or books?"

"Sometimes one, and sometimes the other," answered Willie, timidly, "just as I have them to do."

"That is right, my boy. What is the old rhyme about all work and no play?"

Mr. Sumner was the only one who could repeat it; to do so was a new mark of interest. He seemed almost to have forgotten that he had children before.

"If you can spare Willie a little while," said Mr. Ashton, looking at Mrs. Sumner, "my boy would be very glad to have him drive over to Bristol with him. It is vacation, you know, and they both did so well yesterday they want a little recreation."

Willie's eyes sparkled with pleasure. Mr.

Ashton wondered, as he looked from them to his mother's, lighted up with the same pleasure, that he had never noticed how much they looked alike before.

"He will stop for you as the clock strikes nine. Wrap up warm, for it is very cold—or stay, my wife said James had a nice overcoat which was always too small for him, and she wanted it carried for the shop-keeper to send more cloth of the same kind. Now if you will just slip it on—James can't wear it—it will save it's getting down in the bottom of the sleigh. Boys don't keep every thing right side up, you know, Mrs. Sumner"—but Mrs. Sumner was gone. She had slipped away after her husband, who was attempting to rub up his threadbare coat, and to make himself "look decently" before going to the mill. As gently and tenderly as in those first summer days of their married life, Mrs. Sumner assisted him. She could not help glancing up to him, almost hoping it was not a delusion, that he was himself

again; but his red and bloated face, the dull, heavy eyes and the red lids were there. Still she began to hope;—was there ever a true affection in which the hope of better things was not the last spark to die out of the heart?

She stood at the window, and watched him as he went away with Mr. Ashton. She had little doubt how he would return at night, but even this short reprieve was a blessing, and might be only the beginning of better times.

The first thing Willie had to tell her, after they left, was about the overcoat.

"Only think, mother," he said, "how very nice! I should have shivered away, even under the buffalo. Sometimes I grow so cold, when I am out a long time, that it seems as if I never could get warm again; and I will be very careful of it, not to soil it in the least."

"That's a good boy," said his mother.

Willie looked at her eagerly; there was a sound of the old music in her voice. What could it mean? "What a good mother she is," he

thought; "the least thing that makes me happy is so much to her."

Punctual as the clock, James came driving up to the door. He had two sets of bells, and two very heavy buffaloes, and the overcoat, which he threw out to Willie as he stopped. Willie had never put one on before. He tried not to be awkward about it, but he was, very. He put one arm in easily enough, but that second arm!—he tried it up—no, that wouldn't do; he tried it down, but couldn't find the arm-hole; he tried it behind, but it constantly evaded him. His mother came to his rescue, buttoned it up tight to his chin, and with much gratification once more stood at the window to watch them out of sight. Lotty had caught a glimpse of James as he drove up, and had darted out to the sleigh. James caught her up, kissed her, and thrust a fruit-cake he had brought on purpose into her pocket. As Mrs. Sumner turned from the window, she saw her dividing it with Warren, and only caught up

the baby in time to prevent a great piece being pushed into her mouth.

So commenced Willie's vacation. Every mile of the way the boys were conscious of the fact. They eagerly discussed the examination of the day before, their studies for the coming time, and Willie thought, as they flew along to the music of the merry bells, he was never so happy before. They had a "grand time,"—they both said so, and who should know better? No cloth could be found to match the overcoat, but all the other shopping was satisfactorily done. As they stopped once more at Willie's door, and he commenced unbuttoning the coat to return it, James said,—

"Hold on, Willie! mother said if we couldn't match that coat, she could never do the least thing in the world with it, and if your mother would let you wear it, it would save her the trouble of keeping it from the moths. It fits you splendidly; you just wear it in, and we will talk about it next time I come. Good-bye."

Willie stood confounded. It must be confessed that, as he rode so comfortably along, he had given many thoughts to the nice warm garment he wore. He had wished his father was rich, so that he could give him one; he had wished that he was a man, so that he could earn one for himself; he almost wished he had never put it on, so as not to know how much comfort he had lost; but all these thoughts did not interfere at all with his enjoyment. He had been early taught by his good mother that it was *wrong* to repine; that the only way to be a true Christian was to receive life as God had sent it, without murmuring. Did Willie really wish to be a Christian? We do not know how we can answer better than by saying, that during this ride he had remembered this duty often, and, boy as he was, had asked for strength to submit to his life, like one whom Christ could love.

As this coat had been, notwithstanding it had added so much to his comfort, rather a

source of trial to him too, he stood now, until the sound of the sleigh-bells had entirely ceased, without moving, wondering what it could mean,—if God had heard him, and was answering his only half-thought prayer, or, if he had misunderstood James. His mother's knock on the window first recalled him.

"Willie," she said, as he entered, "you have forgotten the overcoat; run as fast as you can after James, and if you can't overtake him, go directly to the house."

"Mother," said Willie, half hesitating what to say, "unless I am very much mistaken, James gave me this coat. He said his mother wanted you to keep it from the moths, or some such thing, I hardly know what. He drove right away without giving me time to say a single word. What shall we do now?"

"What would you like to do, my son?" said Mrs. Sumner, thoughtfully.

"Just what is right, mother," answered Willie, casting some very longing looks to the

coat, as he began to take it off. "I never had on such a warm thing in all my life, and if it is right to keep it, I think—I think, but I do not feel certain, that I could earn it, and pay Mrs. Ashton what she thinks it is worth."

"Well said, Willie," said his mother, smiling. She thought there must be something in the mannishness of the coat, which had made her boy suddenly old. "But what could a little fellow like you do towards earning money?"

"I don't know, mother—not much I fear, only I would try. 'Win and wear,' Mr. Ross said; I did not know exactly what he meant, but I think it was something like this: If you do not earn your coat, you have no right to wear it. I will take the coat on my arm, if you have no objection, and go up to Mrs. Ashton, and I will tell her the truth without any hesitation."

"And what do you regard as the truth?"

"Why, simply this: that the coat is very nice; that I should like it right well; that we can't afford to buy it and pay money for it; but if

she will tell me any way in which I can earn it during this vacation, I shall be willing to do any thing which I can do well."

"I think that is the right and the manly way, Willie," said his mother, quietly. "I am perfectly willing you should do as you have a fancy to."

"Thank you, mother; you are always kind," said Willie, preparing at the same time to go.

"Here is your dinner—I have kept it ready for you; you had better eat before you go."

"Eat!" said the excited child; "I couldn't, mother, if you had roast beef and plum pudding. James had such a big basket full of lunch put up for us, I thought, when I first saw it, that it was enough for all our dinners at home; but somehow the basket was empty when I left it. You wouldn't think I could eat another morsel for a week, if you had seen how it went."

Mrs. Sumner had known many and many a time, when she was sure the boy had gone

hungry to school, for the supply for all the children had scarcely been more than one strong boy would require. She was grateful to Mrs. Ashton for her thoughtful kindness, and grateful also to that kind heavenly Father who never forgot nor forsook her, though clouds and darkness were often round about her. Now she could not resist the pleasure of folding up nicely that new coat, and laying it carefully upon her boy's arm, as if it was the harbinger of many coming blessings. He was, as she had called him, "a little fellow." A hungry child, and especially an anxious one, has a very slender chance to develop physically, and Willie had often been both. No wonder that he was scarcely larger than many boys of eight; but he had, as we have seen, that very doubtful substitute for bodily growth—an undue growth of brain. His mind was far in advance of many boys' nearly double his age.

James Ashton saw him before he reached

the house, and saw the coat upon his arm. "Oh! mother," he called, running to the parlor, "you were right. Willie's mother will not let him keep that coat; here he is back with it. What shall we do?"

"Keep quiet, James!" said his mother. "Perhaps he has come for something else; don't let him see it troubles you."

"But it does, mother; I thought I had it all fixed nicely, and now it's all to do over again. I wish people wouldn't be so proud in this world."

"Pride is the protection of the poor, often," said Mrs. Ashton, as Willie's timid knock was heard at the side-door. James hastened to open it, but Willie missed his usual cordial reception. James was more than half vexed, for he had prided himself upon the skilful manner in which he had driven off, without giving Willie time to make an objection. I wonder if it occurred to James, when he was wishing people "wouldn't be proud in this world,"

that he was indulging in a kind of pride not nearly as honorable as the one he was condemning? I presume not; but as these two boys stood face to face in the door, this frosty winter noon, they were illustrations of these two kinds. James's was easily controlled by his good sense and good feelings; Willie's was occasioned by his.

"Is your mother at home?" asked Willie, too much excited to be troubled by James's slight coldness.

"Yes, walk in; here she is right in the parlor. But why in the world have you worn your coat on your arm? Did you run, so you had to take it off?"

"Not exactly; for I did not put it on, though I have run a good part of the way.

"Mrs. Ashton," he said, hardly waiting for James to open the parlor door, "my mother thanks you very much for having offered me this nice new overcoat, and so do I. I should rather have it than almost anything I can think

of; but I feel, and so does mother, that I should have a much better right to it, if I could earn it. Mr. Ross said, it was only those boys who could win that should wear, and though I am very small and not very strong, still if I could *earn* it, I should think so much more of it than if you only gave it to me."

"Dear little Willie," said Mrs. Ashton, the mother's heart yearning over the bright, eager face which looked so imploringly up in hers, "I think you look more like being nursed, and taken care of, than being put to work."

"But I can work, if you please, Mrs. Ashton, only I know it will be a trouble to find something for me. It was because you were so kind always to me, that made me think—that made me hope—that——" Willie began to hesitate, and the tears to start.

"Don't cry, Willie," said James; "come, you and I will go down to the mill. Women—even my mother—don't know much about work, but that is no sign that father don't. Come, I'll

help you; I should like the fun right well, and we will soon earn together. How much will you take for it, mother? We will make a trade."

Mrs. Ashton saw at a glance that James was on the right track, so, taking the coat, she examined it with much apparent care. "Well," she said at last, "I can't find a tear or rip all over it. I think you never wore it a half dozen times. I really do feel as if it is worth one dollar; and if Willie can earn the money, I shall be glad to have him take it off my hands."

"One dollar! oh! mother, you are a perfect Jew; it is not worth half that money. Come, now, trade fair. Seeing it is you, I will give you fifty cents for it, and that is twelve and a half more than it's worth. Or, stop! I don't know (taking the coat to the window)—I have no doubt there will come a hole here under this pocket soon. I always do wear holes there the first thing;—say twenty-five cents, now, and be reasonable!"

Willie began to smile—it was just what James wanted. "Come, now! going! going! Say twenty-five, and I will knock it down. A grey coat —an overcoat, gentlemen and ladies—with two pockets and twelve buttons, black velvet collar and cuffs—better than new, because James Ashton has worn it—fine, large pockets for apples, hold a small half bushel apiece—excellent to coast in—beside a variety of other excellencies, too numerous to mention. Gentlemen and ladies, examine for yourselves—going! going! for only twenty-five cents!" These last words James uttered in such a perfect imitation of an auctioneer's voice, that Mrs. Ashton and Willie laughed heartily. But Mrs. Ashton said the coat was worth one dollar, and if she *sold* it at all, she would not take a cent less. Mill hours were, however, over now; Willie could leave the coat, and she would talk with her husband about work, when he came home. Perhaps some way might be planned by which it could be earned.

What a happy boy Willie was, as he went home! And how kind and considerate Mrs. Ashton had been! The boy's self-respect was inviolate. If he could only earn this, perhaps he might do more and more; and pretty soon, who could tell how much comfort he could be to his mother? When he once more reached home, Mr. Ashton was just saying good-bye to his father. He had business around that way, so he walked home with Mr. Sumner, and the poor man was very grateful to him, for it had kept his feet from turning down that well-worn path toward the dramshop. Mr. Ashton stepped in to say one word to Mrs. Sumner, and, happening to glance back as he passed the window, had the satisfaction of seeing Mr. Sumner give the money, which he had well earned, to his wife.

So much for the first day of Willie's vacation.

V.

The Mill.

THE next morning Mr. Sumner was to go again to his business. He showed no inclination to avoid it. He even said to his wife, "I wish, Mary, I had a little better coat. Really, Mr. Ashton's head workman is dressed more respectably than I am."

"I wish you had," answered his wife; "you really need a whole new suit. Perhaps if you can earn for a little while as much as you did yesterday, you will be able to get one." Then she told him the story of Willie's overcoat, and how the boy was to go to-day to earn it, if he could. Mr. Sumner listened in silence. Every word conveyed a tacit reproach to him; but he knew that he well deserved it all, and that his wife did not mean to wound him. But it made him sad; and he forgot quickly, in

the want of his family, his own new clothes, and went, notwithstanding the strong cravings of appetite, directly to the mill.

Mr. Ashton had hardly dared expect him, and there was so much of hearty joy in his reception, that Mr. Sumner set about his work with a zest and interest he had not known for years. His business was, to examine a variety of claims to some real estate which Mr. Ashton was anxious to purchase, but to which he had not been able to establish a secure legal hold. A poor widow claimed the land as hers. She said it had been willed to her by her father, who was one of the original settlers; but as she was a "lone being," without any one to defend her, it had been claimed and occupied by a man who had sold it out in shares to suit his own pleasure. She had no money to go to law with, and so it had gone. But now Mr. Ashton wished to buy. He went to the root of the matter; and here was this unheard, unthought-of widow's claim, in the

hands of a strong, just man, who would see right done. "I have had trust in God," said the poor woman, "through all these long years, while I have seen Mr. Jones grow rich by his gains from that same land. I knew He said, in many places in His good book, that the wicked should not always prosper, and that He would protect the widow. I am old now, sir, and most through; but I have a relative to whom it would do much good to leave this, when I die."

The widow had not in possession her father's will; indeed, she had no idea what had become of it. She had had two brothers. They were both dead, and there was of their families only this one child living. She had married badly, she knew, but could tell nothing more about her.

This was all the information to be obtained. The woman lived in a town sixty miles distant. Mr. Ashton had elicited from her all he could: and Mr. Sumner could not be trusted

to go so far from home as would be required, in order to make her a personal visit. But the investigation became every hour more and more interesting to him, and he found himself often thinking of it when he used to be thinking only of his cup. Pile after pile of papers Mr. Ashton laid before him. The work seemed almost interminable, as he looked at the heap; but he took hold of them with the eagerness of a hungry man, or rather, of an active mind which had at last become weary of doing nothing, and was grateful for occupation.

Willie was not long behind his father. Running until he was all in a glow, he reached Mr. Ashton's house. James was ready to open the door as he came up the steps.

"There!" was his first salutation, "I told you men were better than women for finding work. Just as soon as father heard about it, he said he had plenty for us both to do; he should quite like to hire two clever hands.

If we would come right round when you came, he would set us to work; he wouldn't tell us what we were to do, until we came. Now, sir, in two minutes I will be ready."

What happy boys they were, as they started for their work! They had not been as happy on the previous day, when, with the fine horse and sleigh, they had the pleasant drive before them. Willie was to make his first effort to earn money for his mother; and James was to do a kind act. It would have been difficult to tell which of the two was the most glad, as they ran gaily along toward the mill; now sliding, now rolling up a snowball and tossing it as far as they could toward the clear blue sky, and now stopping to break off a glittering icicle from some corner of an old log, or making new paths where the snow was the deepest, or a bank had been piled up against the wooden fence. Of course they took much longer to reach the mill than if they had walked demurely along, but they carried in

with them bright eyes and red cheeks. There was a glow about Willie's face, which made him almost as handsome as James; and many of the workmen stopped their work for a moment, to look at the boys as they passed. Mr. Ashton was ready for them. "So, my boy," he said, patting Willie on the head, "James and you think you would like to learn to work, as well as study, do you? Well, I am glad of it. It never hurt a man to be able and willing to turn his hand to anything. There is a great deal of truth, but it is not all true, in that old saying, 'Jack of all trades, and master of none.' You boys will serve your trade for six cents a card, if you do well. But now I must tell you, to start with, I never employ any but faithful, trusty men. The first time you attempt in any way to cheat me, I have done with you. Here, Pat," he called to a good-looking Irishman, who was his head overseer, "take these boys; they are raw hands, but I want them well trained.

Take them to the room where they are pasting on patterns, and teach them how. They are to work very neatly, no sham; they must *earn* what I pay them, like the rest of you."

Pat laughed. He had probably received instructions before from his master, for he departed from many of the usual rules, and seemed determined to make the employment a diversion if he could.

He conducted the boys to a neat room, where they found a bushel basket filled with small, square pieces of different kinds of calico.

"Why, Pat," said James, looking askance at the calico, "you are not going to put us to making a bed-quilt, are you? I forgot my thimble; I am afraid I should have to go home before I could begin."

"Faith, Master James," said Pat, "it's not sewing these bits that you are to do; but you are to quilt them on to a large card with a paste-brush."

"Ah! yes, I understand; that is a kind of

" 'I declare it is as good as a sum in square root,' said James."

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needle I haven't a doubt I can use, neatly too. Come, hurrah for business! only 6¼ cents a card! I tell you what, Willie, we sha'n't run any risk of being millionaires to-day."

Pat went to work systematically, and our young workmen were soon busy at their task. How very simple it had looked, and yet, now they were fairly at work, how really difficult it was. All must be so true. If the side of the pattern crooked ever so little, Pat took the calico off, and they must try again.

"I declare, it is as good as a sum in square root," said James.

"You make it crooked root, young men," said Pat, laughing. "None of your larning will sarve you here; it's a straight eye you want."

"Well, neither Willie or I are squint-eyed," answered James. "What puzzles me most is, to tell which is the up and the down of all these little creatures. What are they, Pat? They are neither fish, flesh, nor fowl, and, I am sure, not flowers."

"They are patterns," said Pat, simply; "I have never heard them called anything else.

"Jerry Bates was very anxious to learn this very same thing, and I tried a week to teach him; for you see his father died, and left a lot on 'um with nothing to sarve them; and master, he would do for them, as he does for all your needy folks; but nothing could I make of Jerry. He put these patterns always upside down, and never straight."

"For the upside down, Pat, if they were all so, why didn't you turn the cards? They would have done just as well."

"'Pon my honor! I never thought of that," said Pat, suddenly struck with the possibility. "For the crook, he might have been cured of that; but the upside down! my patience fairly gave out, and I told master 'twant no use. Its hard getting a Paddy right, if he don't take to it natural like; and so we were sorry, for Jerry was kind of

delicate like, and couldn't work in the mill, and we had to let him go."

"Can't he come again, and work with us? we can teach him, you know, James!" whispered Willie.

"First-rate! of course he can. Pat, look here; you call that boy, and we will see that he earns a dollar to-day."

"Better learn yourself first, Master James, and when you have we will talk about Jerry. See there, now! that is as crooked as a ram's horn, and, I declare, bottom side up too."

James laughed good-naturedly, and soon righted his work; but it took all the logic Pat possessed, to make him willing to wait another day before Jerry made a new trial. Pat was the more determined, because Mr. Ashton had told him, specially, that he wished the boys kept away from the others who were about the mill.

The first half day went quickly; but diligent as they had tried to be, neither of the

boys had earned his first fourpence; and James, as he sat down to dinner, announced to his father "that if he had ever had a thought of making him a manufacturer, one week in the mill would completely cure him. There could be no money made at such a rate."

Mr. Ashton had expected this. James loved to do what he could do quickly, and with great results. This was one reason why he loved his books. He would work hard while he worked, but he wanted to drive right through, and be done.

"Let me see," said his father, "you earned about four cents this morning; Willie the same. If you work hard you may do as well this afternoon, and that will be sixteen cents towards the coat, almost one-sixth part of the cost. I doubt if such a coat was ever earned so quickly before."

"But, father, you know—"

"Yes, I know all about it, and also, how much easier it is to plan to do good, and to assist others, than really to do it."

"I am not at all tired of helping Willie," said James, the color coming quickly into his face, while he vacillated between being vexed, and hurt.

"I did not say you were, James. I am only anxious for you to see how much easier it is to talk, than to act. You have had a pretty hard morning of it, but you have had your first important practical lesson in doing good. I often think you children might be to each other almost ministering angels. You can come nearer together; you can feel for each other better than we old people, who more than half forget how we used to be as children; therefore I depend upon you, really, to do good to Willie, instead of either your mother or myself. I will not oblige you to keep at work with him at the mill, but I rather advise that you stand fast, until he has earned his dollar."

"Oh! father, you don't think I would sneak out now, do you? So far from that, I was going to ask if you wouldn't let that poor little

Jerry, that is so stupid, come in and work with us. Between us—Willie and I—I know we can teach him; at any rate, we can try."

"Yes, that would be quite a good idea," answered his father. "I was wondering what I could do for Jerry. You see you are already finding out what it is to be a ministering child."

"Ministering child! that don't sound exactly like servant, more like a minister of state," said James, talking half to himself. "I can't tell exactly whether I should like it. I am sure, it grew hard before twelve, to keep pasting away at those endless little patches, and then not to earn a fourpence, either!"

"You must win, if you would wear," said Mr. Ashton.

"There, father, it does seem as if I was fated to hear that same thing from everybody lately. Mr. Ross said so at examination, and I have heard a dozen fellows repeat it since. Now, I could understand Willie, when he said he wanted to win his coat before he wore it, be-

cause wearing a coat is the most natural thing in the world to do with it; but what you mean by *my* winning, when I am only at work in the mill with two boys, is more than I can imagine. I can't wear those old pasteboard cards, unless you dress me up as they do boys in London, with one great card before and one behind, and send me out as a walking advertisement of the goods you manufacture in your mill."

Mr. Ashton laughed. "I shall not do that," he said, "until you are some feet taller at any rate, so that you may make more show. But what I mean is simply this: You cannot have real, true pleasure in doing good, unless you are at some pains to make a sacrifice for it; you must win that happiness by exertion and by self-denial, else you can never wear, or possess it."

"Now, father, I don't feel sure of that. Suppose I had the dollar, and Willie was willing to take it from me, don't you suppose I should be just as contented and happy in seeing him

wear it, as if I worked like a hero, shut up in that little room in the mill all my vacation, without having a moment to slide, or skate, or ride in?"

"No, indeed you would not; for, in the first place, if Willie would take the money he would be a different kind of a boy from what he is now, and you would not love to do half so well for him; and then, 'what costs nothing yields nothing in return.' But it does cost me a hard silver dollar, which is nothing to you in comparison with a day's steady work. Keep on; you will find it all out by experience by and by."

Willie was coming. It was well he had not heard the conversation, for all the way to Mr. Ashton's he had been troubled by the thought that he was obliging James, for his sake, to lose his slides, and stay shut up in that little room at work; so the first thing he said to James was, "James, it is too bad to keep you at work for me. This morning I thought it would be so

pleasant to have you with me, when everything was strange and new, that I had not the courage to ask you to go ; but now I know more about it, and I really had rather go without my overcoat twice over. I am sorry I must have seemed so very selfish to you. I was selfish, but I did not mean to be. I did not find it out until I left you this noon."

How James's cheek burned. He could hardly believe Willie had not heard all the conversation he had had with his father, and he could only stammer out :

" Willie, upon my word and honor, I had rather go with you than not ; and even if I hadn't, father wouldn't let me off. He never lets me put my hand to the plough, and look back. Last night, when I asked him to let me go, he said he would give me the whole night to think it over in, and if I held to the same determination this morning, he would not prevent me. He never hires a man for less than a week ; so, as I knew that when I let myself, I don't see

but I looked before I leaped. Come on! we'll earn twelve cents a piece this afternoon; and, what is first-rate, father says we may have Jerry in, and teach him."

"Wait until we have learned ourselves," said Willie, laughing, and greatly relieved. If we should teach him wrong, Pat would get out of patience with the whole of us."

The afternoon passed more quickly than the morning; and when the boys went home at night they had earned about ten cents apiece, and "a royal appetite" for their supper.

"Mother," said James, as he sat down to their plentiful and neat tea-table, "how I wish I could peep into Mrs. Sumner's, and see what Willie has for his tea. I am as hungry as two bears, and feel as if I could eat up everything here, tablecloth and all. Now, I dare say he has only just so much; and he is always thinking of everybody but himself, so if there is not a lot there, he will go to bed hungry, I am sure."

Willie did have a scant supper, and did go hungry to bed; but it seemed to him he had never been so happy in his whole life before. His father had come home sober. Lotty had crept to his lap, and, lifting her hair from off the wound which he had inflicted, she had motioned to him to kiss it, and, taking his hand, had repeatedly drawn it softly over it, her token of forgiveness and reconciliation.

Mr. Sumner tenderly kissed her, put both arms around, and pressed her to his heart. That heart, it seemed, was human still; and Mrs. Sumner, with tears dropping fast upon her baby's hands, lifted her hastily up to conceal them, while the child danced and crowed as if it had a perfect comprehension of the joy of the scene. Willie came in at this moment. James needed not to have so much pitied him, for the boy was more blessed that night than for many long, long weeks before.

When Willie went to his bed, he sat a long time, until he was benumbed and stiff from the

cold, thinking over the events of the day. He had a feeling of having been thoughtless and selfish with regard to James. He wondered how he could have been so, when he had that very morning asked God to help him to be thoughtful and careful for other people. He began to be afraid it would be a much harder thing to be a little Christian boy in prosperity, than it had been in adversity. How earnestly he prayed that night; with what sincerity and humility! His mother, who had come softly up, as was her wont, to see if he was comfortable for the night, was surprised at the contrite, supplicating tone of his prayer. She went away troubled lest he should have been doing wrong, and determined, on the very next morning, to induce him to give her his entire confidence.

At last, after much tossing and turning—for Willie was too tired and too hungry to sleep easily, even after he had lain all his faults before his heavenly Father, asking His for-

giveness and assistance in never erring the same way again—he fell into a deep sleep. The late winter's sun rose before him; and, indeed, he might have slumbered on until mill hours, had not Lotty, with her shrill voice and her soft hand, broken his sound nap.

V.

Jerry.

THIS morning Jerry was to go with them. It was almost the first thought Willie had, as he hurried through his breakfast, and started off as fast as he could run for James; but James had been up and out long before him. Neither hungry nor tired, for he was a much stronger boy than Willie, he had gone early to sleep. No troubles of conscience had he; though, in reality, he had been quite as selfish as Willie. He was not a thoughtful boy, so far as right and wrong were concerned. His impulses seemed to be almost all noble and good. He did not love to do wrong, because it made others unhappy. He was quick and bright, so he seldom tried the patience of either his teachers or his parents. The consequence was, that he was found little fault with, and his

conscience was generally at rest. He always prayed at night; but his prayers were thanks for the blessings received, and for the happiness of a very happy life. James never thought about his being a sinner. He had, as I have said, very little idea that he ever did wrong. He was so amiable and pleasant, that it would have been difficult for any one, even his mother, to put her finger upon a positive fault, and say to him, This needs repentance and forgiveness. His perfectly healthy physical frame, too, was a great aid to him in this easy kind of life. He was never sick, never unhappy, never knew a real want of any kind. Life was a beautiful summer day, and he floated along through it, plucking all its sweet flowers, loving every thing he saw with a warm, glad heart, neither uneasy for his future himself, or giving cause for anxiety to those he loved best. How different it was with Willie! Delicate in body, sensitive and shrinking in mind, sin, sorrow, shame, had been con-

stantly before him. It is no wonder that his mother's sincere piety was also greatly colored by the circumstances of her life, and that, in her education of her boy, she should early have taught him strict self-examination into his motives for action, and a clinging sense of dependence upon the love and mercy of God, to be a shield and buckler from the many temptations to which he must be exposed. Almost all my young readers will say, that God was much kinder in the events of life which He ordered to James, than to Willie; but they must remember that it is those 'He loveth, He chasteneth; and scourgeth every son whom He would bring near to Himself.'

But to return to our story. James had been for Jerry, and the two boys came running to meet Willie, almost out of breath. Jerry had been at school, while his father was living, but he was so singularly stupid that he made no progress in his books; and, moreover, he was so much the butt of the school for his thickhead-

edness, that Mr. Lane was glad to have him kept at home. When Willie caught a glimpse of his great stupid face, he had little hope of his improvement since those old school-days, and some misgivings as to their power of rendering him really useful. However, he received him cordially, and laughed at the wry face which James made up, as he stepped just behind his new protégé.

Patrick had the room all ready for them, but shook his head when he saw Jerry, as much as to say, "You can't do any thing with him. Now, do you suppose you are smarter than I am? He beat me, and he'll beat you. But young folks always think they can do every thing. The best way is to try and see."

Jerry blundered along, stumbling over every obstacle that was in his way, until Pat, losing his patience, exclaimed, "That boy, as sartin as the world, has his eyes in the back of his head. He would beat his brains out against the side of the mill, if some one did not call

out to him!" At that instant Jerry pitched over a bale of cotton. "There, I told you so!" said Pat, indignantly, while Jerry picked himself up and commenced rubbing his hands violently; "he would fall over the sun, if it happened to be in his way. He's a born dunce, and when that happens, it a'n't no matter to try to do any thing."

Jerry looked mortified. If he was a dunce, he had sense enough to feel that he was ignorant and stupid; or so at least Willie thought, as he began to be sorry for the boy.

He wondered if Jerry might not feel weak, as he did sometimes. Perhaps he had had no breakfast. Jerry's red face, however, precluded any idea of very great physical weakness. No matter, he needed pity, or something else, or he would grow into a useless man; and then, what would become of that poor mother and all those little brothers and sisters?

It is really singular, and shows plainly the directing power of God, that any pure, simple

effort to do good seems to have a boundless influence. It is not only the person or thing to which the effort is applied, but all those ties and relationships which bind together are touched and influenced. Our story, in its progress, will specially illustrate this truth.

For the first hour after they commenced work, James could do little but laugh at Jerry.

"Why, man alive," said he, looking over his shoulder at the card he was busy upon, "did you ever in your life see a bunch of flowers tied up with their stems at the top? See here! here is a rose with its petals hanging down, as if some child had broken it and run; and there is a daisy that must have grown in the sky, and come down head first! Jerry, you ought to have nothing but hare-bells; they grow your fashion."

Willie could not help laughing, but, taking off the pattern, he said, in a cheerful tone,—

"Never mind, Jerry, you have to pound iron hard, you know, to make it fit, but when it's done

it isn't easy moving it. Now, it will be just so with you; pound away at flowers, and when you once find out where the stems belong, there will be no getting it out of you. Here, see here! these little things are stems; stems never go round so, like the flowers. Now take up another piece, and show me which is stem and which is flower."

Jerry fumbled away among the bits of calico. At length he produced a queer-looking pattern, a thing which Pat had so truly pronounced "only a pattern." Having surveyed it carefully on all four sides, he at length decided, and with a very triumphant air held it up to Willie.

"See here! there," pointing to the nondescript things, "there is a rose, with the leaves straight up like a ramrod; and here is a daisy growing—why yes, James said so—out of the sky, and—and a cabbage, I guess, growing—why, in Mr. Carter's tater patch, I think."

This was a great effort for Jerry, and, sup-

posing the boys' laugh one of approval at his smartness, he would have gone on ; but Willie told him there were no flowers there—"he could put that on any way, one would do as well as another."

"Why, I thought there was a whole lot on 'um, a kind of nosegay," said Jerry, not a little disappointed.

Teaching Jerry occupied and amused the boys so much, that the clock struck twelve long before they were ready for it. To their surprise they found that they had not accomplished as much as they had even the day before.

When they came back from dinner, they found Jerry already there, and a great variety of pieces spread out all over the floor.

"Oh ! Willie," he said, eagerly, "I have put all these stems down. Now look ! look ! I shall only have to paste them right on."

"What a busy boy you have been," said James, looking at the patch-work floor. "Cer-

tainly you have one right in fifty, if this is the top."

"Yes, that is the top. And I have turned, and turned, and turned them ever since you went away. I meant to have some right, any how."

"You are industrious as a bee," said James, kindly. "You'll make a man yet, only keep on."

"You beat us in punctuality, at any rate," said Willie; "and Mr. Lane says that is a prime virtue, the root of all others."

"I didn't go away," said Jerry, looking a little ashamed.

"Oh! you brought your dinner with you. Well, that is a grand idea. Let's you and I do so to-morrow, Willie," said James.

"No, I didn't bring my dinner, either," answered Jerry, sulkily. "A fellow can stay without eating, I suppose, if he has a mind to."

"If he has a mind, certainly," said James, not a little astonished. "My father has no

laws to compel his hands to eat, that I know of; but you don't mean that you have been here all day without anything to eat?"

"I a'n't hungry," said Jerry, beginning to rearrange his patterns.

"But you see I know better than that," said James, gently. "There never was a boy that was not hungry. My mother—and she knows everything—says, a good appetite is as regular a part of a boy, as going to sleep at night."

"I don't care, I don't want any dinner," persisted Jerry, putting all the patterns he had straight crooked. "I a'n't hungry one bit."

James was putting on his overcoat, though he had but just taken it off. "Where are you going?" asked Willie, in surprise.

"I am just going out a minute or so; I will go and tell my father first, so you needn't be troubled," said James, and away he went.

While he was gone, Willie went hard to work to teach Jerry. The boy had much con-

fidence in him, and felt sure of being neither petted nor laughed at. It is wonderful what a key to every thing a kind word is. It unlocks not only the heart, but the head. Jerry really began to have some idea of what he was to do. Willie's comparison of the iron was not so bad a one. Jerry was quite as hard and intractable, but a gentle word came down with so much more weight than a mallet would! Jerry had been thumped with these all his lifetime, and only became stiffer and more stubborn. By the time James returned, he was really at work. To be sure he took a great while to decide, but when once placed, Willie saw, to his delight, that they were right.

James came in, with a little covered basket in his hand. How red his cheeks were, and how his eyes literally danced with happiness! "There," he said, putting the basket down before Jerry, "eat away, like a trooper. I could not do the first thing with such a hungry fellow here. Why, man, I should have been

expecting to see you eat up the whole basket of calico before night!"

Jerry stared. The most stupid stare the boys ever saw on his face. Poor boy! he had never had such a kind thing done for him before in all his life, and it is no wonder that he could not comprehend it now.

"Well, I declare, he don't know what I mean! See here, Jerry! it's nothing but to open your mouth, and eat this piece of pie and that cake; and, yes—I thought it wouldn't be like mother to forget—here is a big slice of bread, and some cold meat. Come, fall too, Jerry; let us see how fast it can go." Still Jerry stared. At last he said,

"It's a full mile there, every inch on't."

"Mile where, Jerry?"

"Why, down there to Mr. Ashton's house. It's a full mile out, and another back!"

"Well, what of that?"

"And he went," continued Jerry, as if talking to himself, "clean there and back."

"That's a fact; but it don't hurt your dinner."

"I couldn't eat a mouthful, nohow. It a'n't fair; I can't eat them things," pushing the basket resolutely away; "not if I were twice as hungry I wouldn't."

"*That* is not fair," said James, laughing heartily, "now I have gone and done it, not to eat it! Why, I took a bit myself, to keep up my strength; so you needn't be afraid. I am not delicate, mother says."

"But you are the best fellow I ever saw in my life," said Willie, who had been looking on with glistening eyes. "Come, Jerry, eat away, and then you can work the faster. I can never do much if I am hungry, real hungry, I mean; for all my strength gives way."

James wondered if Willie was not hungry too; but the pale child stood there, with his sufferings and his wants wrapped in an impenetrable veil of self-respect. James would not for the world have hinted at what he more

than half suspected. Still Jerry looked at the cover of the basket without raising it.

"Well, Willie," said James, thinking of an expedient which might assist each one, "you and I can eat it if Jerry can't;" so he lifted the cover, and, with a look which Willie understood, handed him a piece of pie. "There are two more," he said, peeping in, "one apiece. I never saw any thing like mother, she always thinks of everybody. Who would have thought she would have remembered you and I? I only asked for dinner for one."

Willie took his pie; and the three boys, sitting down on boxes, began to eat. To whom did it taste the best it would be difficult to say. Jerry was very hungry; he could forget or stifle it, but, when food was once tasted, he devoured it ravenously. Willie had slipped his piece of bread and butter on to Lotty's plate when his mother had not observed him; and how rewarded he felt, as the little soft hand patted his cheek for thanks! He did not

know that he was hungry, for he rarely knew what it was to be satisfied, but never did any thing taste better than that piece of Mrs. Ashton's nice pie.

James had the delight of doing good. Need I say another word for his enjoyment to my young reader?

When night came, all three were astonished to see how little they had accomplished, scarcely more than the day before. Yet they were much less discouraged, and parted, promising wonderful success and diligence on the morrow.

Meanwhile Mr. Sumner had gone busily on with his work, growing daily more and more interested in it. And, as a spark of his old love for intellectual employment was rekindled, he strove against the cravings of his appetite for drink with more of manly energy than his friends had dared to hope remained within him. How his wife watched and prayed for him! How Willie, kneeling, tired and

sleepy at night, was suddenly roused, by thought of the sober father whose step he heard even then pacing steadily up and down the small room below, to utter such fervent thanks to Him who had caused this light to spring up in their darkness.

IV.

Latin Grammar.

A WHOLE week of vacation—a very long week it was too, to James—passed before the coat was earned. But it was a happy hour when, the money being transferred from their pockets to Mrs. Ashton's hand, the overcoat was put upon Willie: and running faster than he ever remembered to have ran before, he burst into his mother's room with,

"Three cheers for the overcoat! Here it is. James and I have a right to it, for we have won it; earned every cent, and paid it too."

"Well," said his mother, smiling, "is it still joint property? Who is to wear it, James, or you?"

"Why, as James can't, I suppose I must. And I will be very careful of it too, so War-

ren can have it when he grows up to be a big boy."

Warren was already intently studying into the mysteries of the pockets; and when he drew out his little hands, drew out also two small bundles. One was marked, as Willie quickly saw, "Lotty," and the other "Warren." In one was a pretty doll, with four or five sets of dresses—a tiny doll, but with such pretty red cheeks and shiny black eyes; and in the other, a dozen marbles, all kinds and colors. Warren's eyes were as shiny as the doll's, when Willie placed them all in his big hand and told him they were his. How much more valuable this coat was already! Even Lotty seemed to have an idea that it was connected with happiness, for she laid her soft cheek on the velvet collar, and patted it, with her expression of love.

Warren went down again and again to the bottom of the pockets. He could hardly be persuaded that they did not contain a whole

toy-shop full of pretty things; and alternately eyed his marbles and the coat, as if the relation between them was most mysterious.

Willie had accomplished his object; and every day at the mill seemed to have added months to the purpose and plan of his life. He had been busy thinking, while Jerry and James were talking—thinking over his future life; not with the vague dreaming of a boy, but with aims and minute plans. There is only one into which we feel at liberty to introduce our reader. He wished to follow his grandfather's profession, *and be a minister*. Many a boy, poor, delicate, and with fewer friends than Willie possessed, had become rich men—and some, great men. Willie was well acquainted with their lives; and their struggles had often encouraged him, when the obstacles by which he was surrounded seemed almost insurmountable. But his ambition was not to make money, it was not to be great; but it was to be good, and do good,—to obtain the

Christian's hope, to get an education, and become a minister. These were Willie's first and dearest wishes. It was of these things that he had thought and planned, as he stood busy with his pattern cards, in the noisy mill. And the earning of this coat—the ability to possess himself, by effort, of what he wished—was an epoch in his young life. He did not stop to consider that he had not done this alone: neither did he annoy himself with the wonder whether he should have succeeded. He *knew* he should, unless sickness, or something independent of himself, should happen to prevent it; and this is, after all, the first proof in a boy of ability to succeed—*self-reliance.* I mean true self-reliance, founded on a knowledge of one's own power, and the consciousness of rectitude, rights thoughts and feelings, and a right manner of living. It underlies manhood. It is the gold, the precious ore of character; and without it no one can really prosper,—can become either truly great,

or good. To-night Willie was filled with thoughts of the future. He wished the children would go to bed, so that he might have an opportunity to talk with his mother before his father came home. But he did not mean to begin by doing wrong; and he knew that to wish to send them away before their time, particularly when they were so occupied and delighted with their playthings, would be selfish, and consequently wrong. It is so much easier to plan for being good in the future, and in some very important way, than to start right about it in the very first little thing which tempts to sin! Willie had been thoroughly taught this by his mother, and his own rapidly developing Christian character, had daily impressed him with its truth and importance. There is hardly a child who thinks at all, who does not mean at some time, and in some way, to be a Christian. But how few there are who are willing to begin while they are children, by trying to do right in a very

small matter. To-night, if Willie had asked his mother to send the children away, and had told her why he wished it, she would probably have sent them at once; but would Willie have been as near the greatest of his wishes, that of being a good man? We leave it for our young friends to answer for themselves. Time would have gone slowly; but after Willie had decided that he would not be selfish—so immediately does one good thing lead to another—he decided he would do something to make the children happy; and he gathered them all about him, and began to show them how to play marbles. His mother never suspected, as he sat there on the floor, surrounded by the little group, so cheerful and patient, that her boy's heart was really aching for an hour's long, free talk with her. Nor was Willie to have it to-night, for, before bedtime came, his father returned, and the table was soon covered with yellow, soiled papers, filled with writing. He told Willie he would be there busy, and re-

quire a quiet room all the evening; so the boy went to bed, and tried to keep awake until his mother should come up. Sleep, however, overpowered him; and, when Mrs. Sumner came softly in, the beautiful moonlight streamed across her boy's sleeping face. How peaceful and gentle it looked in its soft beams! She could not help fancying, as she bent over him to kiss him, that it almost encircled his head with a halo. In spite of her good sense, she went to bed a little troubled; she fancied he had looked more than usually pale, and a shadow fell over her heart unlike any that had rested there before.

Very early on the next morning Willie wakened, and hastened down, hoping he might find his mother awake and up before the rest of the family. Yes, there she was, sweeping, dusting, and at the same time preparing breakfast, all in such a neat, handy manner, that Willie watched her without being able to interrupt her. He could assist her in many little

ways, and was frequently rewarded by a smile, or word of approbation.

"You are as handy as a girl," his mother said, as he laid the table, with that care which even in her reduced circumstances she was anxious to retain. "If I cannot do more for the comfort of my children, I can at least," Mrs. Sumner often said to herself, "give them the advantage of neat and proper personal habits. They can be refined, if they cannot be rich." So she guarded them in every little thing; and often, when almost too sick or weary to move, busied herself in carefully removing every speck of dust, or in placing their scanty furniture so that it should appear more cheerful and tasteful. Mrs. Sumner had certainly brought the spirit of the old pleasant parsonage to her own destitute home.

Willie had early imbibed this spirit. He loved to aid his mother in all these efforts, and through the summer had made it his especial care to keep the flower vases—only cracked

tumblers to be sure, but none the worse for that — filled with fresh wild-flowers. His mother seemed so occupied this morning, that Willie had the feeling of its being selfish to interrupt her for what so entirely pertained to himself, when, happily for him, she noticed his unusually earnest face, and said, the thought of her last night's fear crossing her mind, "Willie, are you sick to-day?"

"No, mother, not one bit," said Willie, cheerfully. "I am only busy as a bee planning out—oh! lots of pleasant things."

"Such as what?" asked his mother, smiling.

"Why, such as growing up to be a man, and being a minister, and taking you home to a parsonage like grandfather's!"

There was a slight trembling in Willie's voice, which specially attracted his mother's attention. She looked earnestly at him, and said,—

"My poor boy! have you already begun to think of the future? It has been my daily

prayer for you, ever since you were born, that you might be as good a minister as your grandfather; but every year we go further and further from the power of giving you an education."

"I don't want you to give me one, mother. If you will let me, I will earn one for myself."

"If you were a great strong boy, and had no home-care, you might succeed; but, as it is, perhaps it will be best not to think much of it."

Willie's countenance fell. His mother's word was law. He had not been accustomed to dispute it, even in thought, but he had never so much to give up before. It was very hard; and, in spite of his efforts, tears dropped upon his hands.

"Willie," said his mother, very soberly, "you are a young boy yet, not eleven. If you are really very desirous to have an education, suppose we only put it aside for a year, then

see how we shall be situated at the end of that time. Can you wait happily?"

"I will try, mother. But I thought now Mr. Ashton has given me work, and father was earning, so you wouldn't need it very much,—if I could take what I earn, and buy me a Latin grammar, I could make a beginning. There are only four of our boys who study Latin, and every term they get further on, away from me."

"How much would the grammar cost?"

"Seventy-five cents," said Willie, sorrowfully. "I know it is a great deal, almost as much as my overcoat."

"And that is only one thing in a very expensive course. But, Willie, if you will promise only to work half of the day you may begin, and we will feel our way along carefully. I would not say much of your wishes to any one, because it is most probable you will not be able to earn the grammar after all."

"Thank you, thank you, dear mother," said

Willie, throwing his arms about her neck, and kissing her. "If you say so, I know I shall succeed; for I have asked God so many times to keep me from doing a selfish thing about it, and guide me into the right way! He wouldn't let me do wrong, when I have never forgotten for so long to pray to be kept from it, would he, mother?"

"Often, Willie," said his mother, "when we are very desirous of doing a thing, we are apt to take the permanency of our own wishes for a special indication of the divine blessing; but I do not see any thing selfish or wrong in this case. To be a minister implies being a very good man, and working all your life long for God."

"I know it, mother; and that seems so beautiful to me. I had rather do something for Jesus than be a king, or as rich a man as Crœsus.'

"God bless you, darling," said his mother, fondly. "I don't know how I can ever find it

in my heart to murmur at any of His dispensations."

Willie did not quite understand her, nor was it necessary that he should. And just now the baby began to cry, and Lotty's soft step stole into the kitchen.

"She comes like a sunbeam, mother," said Willie, looking at her sweet face. "She is so gentle, and still, and so very lovely, that I never see her come in but I think God gave her to us without any other voice than he gives the sunbeams and the flowers; and that, while she cannot hear us, she is all the time hearing the angels, and tells us what they say whenever we look at her. Now, see! I am sure no one ever smiled like that. Don't you believe she has heard things to-night which make her holy. Sometimes I have almost a fear of her, she seems so pure and good, so different from us earthly little children."

"She is a precious child," said her mother, drawing her to her. "People call us afflicted,

because God sent her to us so ; but I think, as you do, Willie, that she is almost an angel, sent to comfort and sustain us." And so mother and son talked before this deaf and dumb child these thoughts of love writing themselves so legibly upon their faces that the child, to whom the language of words was forever forbidden, interpreted this silent and true language, with a keen appreciation which sound alone could never convey. And her own face was, in truth, as radiant as the sunbeam to which Willie had compared her.

After breakfast Willie must go to Mr. Ashton's to ask leave to continue his work. This was readily given, though Mrs. Ashton thought with regret of those pale, thin cheeks, growing paler and thinner by such constant confinement. And when she said so to Willie, he told her his mother had prohibited his working more than half the day, so that he should have more playtime than he would know what to do with.

James rejoiced much more at this part than at the other. He had had all he wanted of the mill, and never failed, at every convenient opportunity, to repeat to his father his intention of never being a manufacturer.

When Willie returned to the mill he found Jerry still at work. The iron was fairly bent; and the boy, proving industrious and persevering, was already beginning to help his mother. Willie was glad to find him there; boys are very social, and work is twice as easy when done in company. So these two boys worked and talked, day after day, James coming in occasionally to make them a call, until their vacation was over.

Willie had worked very diligently, but had not earned more than sixty-two cents. He can not be said to have been disappointed, for he had only hoped, not expected, to buy his grammar for this term. Still, when he went to school and heard Mr. Lane say that he should review his class in Latin, which would

afford an opportunity for any other boy who wished to study it, and was willing to study hard, to join it, he felt grieved and dispirited, and could not forbear telling his mother about it.

"It was a great pity," so his mother thought and said, and she went at once to work to help her boy, if she could. Fortunately she had the money, and brought it to him; but Willie entirely refused to touch it. "I must win, if I would wear," mother, he said; and resolutely restraining his tears, returned to school. As he was taking his seat, school not having yet commenced, Lina came up to him, and putting her little hand, warm from a nice new mitten, into his, said, "Willie, you looked as if you were not happy when you went home this noon. Do you want to go back into papa's mill to work? I should not think it was half as nice as this school-room, where we all are."

"Did I look unhappy, Lina?" said Willie, whispering very softly. "I was a naughty boy, if I did. I am happy.'

"No, you are not!" persisted Lina; "you have that very same look now, as if you would like to cry, only you are ashamed to because you are a boy. Are your fingers cold, or what is it?"

Willie smiled. It was the promptings of nature which made him whisper, forgetting for a moment his mother's injunction of silence. "It is nothing, only I wanted to study Latin, and I could not quite earn my grammar. So you see how silly I am—not nearly as brave as you would be, Lina, if you are a girl."

"Is that all?" said Lina, opening her blue eyes very wide with astonishment; "why, that is just nothing at all. Latin is hateful; Sam Johnson says it is."

"But I don't think so," said Willie, more than half tempted to finish his confidence by telling why he was so anxious to study it. "I am going to study it, you see; and I only felt badly to lose this fine chance."

"Why, you needn't lose it; if you really

are so silly as to want to learn those queer-sounding words, I will bring you a book this very afternoon. Father said he meant to do a great deal for you, and this is only very little—one book."

"Stop, Lina!" said Willie, almost terrified at what he had done; "you must promise me never to say a word to your father or James about it, or I never will, never, tell you any thing again in the world. Promise me, Lina, please do, quick! or I shall be so sorry I said a word."

"I will not promise you," said Lina, looking decided; "I will tell father, and you shall have the new book."

"Then, Lina, I shall never love you any more," said Willie, sorrowfully.

"You will! everybody loves me. James says I plague him awfully sometimes, but still he can't help loving me. And beside, I don't plague you; I only get you a nice new book."

"I can not take it, if you bring it; because,

Lina, you see, I have promised myself never to wear what I can not win."

"Well, you don't want to wear a Latin grammar, do you?" said Lina, very much puzzled.

"Not on my head, but in it, Lina," said Willie, laughing. "Now, be a good child, and promise me."

"I will not tell father, then," said Lina, evasively, "if you are so cross about it."

"Nor your mother, nor James!"

"Why, no, not if I can't; but I think it very odd." Lina kept her word just as far as it went; but at recess she was at Mr. Lane's desk, and had whispered to him the whole story.

Mr. Lane looked very thoughtful. Lina did not like it; she expected he would take a book up at once, and give it to Willie. She thought him both cross and selfish, when he simply said, "I will attend to this some other time; I am busy now, you see, Lina. Run away, and play!"

Lina would not play. She went to her desk,

and sat down, and pouted; feeling that both Mr. Lane and Willie were very foolish and obstinate.

That night, after school, Mr. Lane contrived to walk home with Willie, and, in the course of a pleasant conversation, asked him if he wished to study Latin. Willie confessed that he did, very much. Mr. Lane wisely forbore to make any inquiries about his future plans, but when they parted said, "I have a grammar most as good as new for anybody, and quite as good as new for you, for you are careful and tidy in the use of your books. Now you may have it for fifty cents, and that is allowing you twenty-five cents—about a fair discount—for the use I have already had out of it."

Bless you, Mr. Lane! You may have offered many cups of cold water before in your life, but surely never to such a thirsty child as this. I have written a blessing upon you for it, but you will not value that; you know full

well that there is one registered for you by Him who promised it to those who should assist His very least.

"Mother," said Willie, rushing into the house with even more delight than when he had brought home the new coat, "I have it! I have it! Mr. Lane, of his own accord. offered me a grammar for fifty cents!"

"And now for the Latin, I suppose, Willie," said his mother, with her quick sympathy.

"And for college, theological seminary, and a parish!" added Willie, buoyant with the prospect of that happy coming future.

VII.

The Old Trunk.

UNFORTUNATELY for Willie, the grammar was not the only book needed to complete his education. It was not many weeks, after commencing Latin, before he found a large dictionary, like what the other boys used, would be of the greatest assistance to him. Mr. Lane kindly lent him his, whenever the lesson required it; but Willie, having to study hard to keep up with a class who had the advantage of many months' previous instruction, thought, if he could only have one of his own, to use in these winter-evening hours which he devoted to his Latin, he should learn so much faster, and with so much greater ease. All his father's college books had been long since sold. A dictionary cost, oh! so much money. Willie named the sum over

again and again, as if hoping to lessen it, but it was of no use. He could not work at the mill. The days were so short and dark that it was only by being very industrious he could accomplish what he did. After an evening of uncommon vexation and trouble for want of this book, Willie went up to bed. He seated himself, to read his evening portion of his Bible, upon an old red hair trunk. It had always been there. Willie had seen it ever since he could remember. When very little, he had loved to creep out of bed early in the morning, and put his fingers upon the small brass-headed nails which attached the straight brown leather to its edges. He had never thought of opening it; indeed, I doubt whether he knew it could be opened. It was the only seat in his small room, and it had never been any thing but a seat to him. As he sat down upon it to-night, tired, and a little heavy-hearted at the constant surmounting of obstacles which seemed to make so great a part

of his life, his eye wandered from it to his Bible. He did not think of it; but he saw it constantly. At last he roused himself from his listless condition, and, turning to a Psalm which was always full of comfort to him, began to read: "The Lord is my Shepherd; I shall not want." Willie stopped to think over this; "I shall not want!" What a world of comfort and solace there was in these words, to that boy! It seemed to him to-night that it never had been so full of meaning before. "The Lord is my Shepherd;" and this little fainting lamb laid hold of the promise, and praying earnestly for help and aid, he rose from his knees relieved and happy. "I wonder," he said aloud to himself, "if it would not be right to ask God to help me to get a dictionary." Willie had much reverence in his nature, but he was also confiding and trustful. The more he thought now of this, the more sure he felt that it was the object of prayer to ask God's help in whatever was right; and, in a child's

way, the object for which he wished the book mixed itself up with the dictionary. No longer doubting its propriety, he knelt again, and asked in simple, earnest words for it.

As he rose, his eye fell upon the old trunk with a peculiar interest. He tried the lid; it was locked. Then he remembered that his mother had told him it once belonged to his grandfather, and now contained a few of the things of his which remained.

He determined to ask her to let him examine them. Perhaps there were sermons there, and he might learn from them how to write his own. Perhaps there were books; yes, yes, he hardly dared indulge the thought! but who could say that the very dictionary he needed was not hidden away there! He grew so eager to examine it, that he could hardly make up his mind to go to sleep and wait quietly for the morning. If he had not noticed that his mother was looking pale when he came up to bed, he would certainly have dressed himself,

and, cold as it was, made sure of what was there before another hour had passed. But this could not be done. He must be patient; and so at last he was, and fell asleep.

The first thing he saw next morning, when he opened his eyes, was the sun streaming in upon the short, shining hair of the trunk. He wondered he had never noticed how peculiar looking it was before; what kind of an animal it was that could have had such a skin; in what country it lived; who killed it; and a variety of queries which were entirely new to him.

He dressed quickly; but, even hurried as he was, he did not forget to pray. My young readers must have noticed that Willie was a praying child. This was undoubtedly the reason why God blessed him. His mother had almost forgotten that the trunk could unlock. It had not been opened for years. She remembered to have put away in it a few old books, and many papers, which her father had once

considered valuable. But they were of no use to her, except as relics; and as such she treasured them. She found the key without difficulty—her things were always in their place—and went up with Willie, thinking the lock would probably be rusty, it was so long since it had been turned. It made a thrill of early associations pass over her, as she put in the key. Unnoticed as it had been for years, it seemed suddenly to have acquired a power and life of its own. It brought before her quickly the neat, quiet study, where, for years and years, it had always occupied one corner; and of the father, whose grey hairs had been brought so soon to the grave, when he knew that the blight had fallen over her life.

Thoughts are busy things. Mrs. Sumner, while that key was turning, found her past life all unlocked; and as she raised the cover, it was almost like drawing back a curtain which was veiling the past. Every thing remained as she had packed it in that study, the

day after her father's funeral. She had removed the books which always stood upon his study table, and then the papers from his private drawers and desks. They had never been examined since. Willie had told her why he wished to search it now; so, charging him to be as quick as possible, and not remain long in the cold, she went down. Willie began to lift the papers, carefully and reverently. There were several bundles tied up with red tape, like those he used to see in his father's office. Then there were large piles of closely-written manuscript; sermons, without doubt. Willie felt as if a mine of wealth had opened to him, as he put them, also, reverently aside. Then he began to discover the edges of some well-kept books. Brown they were, and very smooth, as if they had been used as well as kept. Eagerly lifting one, he found it was a volume of Barrow's Sermons; another was an old Commentary on the Romans; then came Baxter's Saints' Rest; Doddridge's Rise and Progress;

a large Bible, with close references—this Willie took out; he would ask his mother to give it to him. One or two Greek books; a Latin book. He was now almost at the bottom of the trunk; there remained but one layer more. Willie hardly dared to look. He had so certainly expected the dictionary, that not to find it now would really be a disappointment. He began to raise first one, then another, very slowly. No, no, no, he said, hardly looking, excepting to see they were not *the book*. At last, the very last book there was seemed to promise, by its size, that it might be it. It took both of Willie's small hands to lift it. He was so eager to see if it was right that, when he held it before his eyes, the letters grew dim, and wavered to and fro as if they were playing catcher with him. He did finally read dictionary, and, opening it, read a Latin word. If Willie had found, as we sometimes read in story-books, bank bills between every leaf, he would not have been half so delight-

"He danced around the room almost wild with joy."

Win and Wear. p. 153.

ed. He hugged and kissed it as if it was a thing of life sent to be loved. He danced around the room, almost wild with joy; and, forgetting the things which he had strewed all over the floor, he ran to carry his treasure down to his mother. His father had heard the noise he had been making in the room above, and chid him sharply for it as he came in. But Willie scarcely heard him; he had not meant to do wrong, and *here* was the book. His mother smiled, and motioned for him to be a little more quiet in his joy. She respected the struggle which her husband was making for a new life, and would not allow his weakened nerves to be jarred by a single discordant sound at home. She felt as if she must nurse him tenderly, as she would a convalescing child. Willie obeyed instantly, slipping his dictionary under his grammar. He went to his morning task quietly and silently, and he was more than repaid by his father putting his hand on his head, as he went out to school,

and saying, in more fatherly tones than he had heard for years, "Willie, you don't grow fast enough; you must take a start now, my boy."

Now! Willie thought that word over and over as he went to school. What a beautiful time in his short life this *now* was fast becoming!

Mr. Lane was scarcely less glad than Willie to see the book. He knew how much he must soon require it, and could not possibly contrive any means by which he could help him to so costly a work. "You will prize it doubly, Willie," he said, "for being your grandfather's and I hope you may live to make as good use of it."

"Thank you, sir," said Willie; "I hope so, too. If I am half as good a man as grandfather, I shall be very thankful."

When Willie went to his sums, he found himself drawing the old red trunk upon his slate instead of setting down his figures. This

was not right. Willie soon perceived it, and went to work with more diligence, to make up the lost moment; but such possession had this piece of furniture—for it had long been nothing else—taken of his mind, that as soon as dinner was over he hurried to his room, just to have one look at these dear old sermons! What a small, neat hand they were all written in! It was almost illegible to Willie; and, after a half hour spent in trying to decypher one, he gave it up, for the present at least.

There were those bundles with the red strings: he laid those on the top, where he could easily catch them up at any spare moment, and went again to school. There was now no obstacle in his way. He had his tools, but he was yet to show how much of a workman he would prove himself in their use. "Fortune favors the brave" is a very good maxim, but it is better to believe that Fortune favors the industrious and earnest. Or, there is another adage, which is truer and better

still: "God helps him who helps himself." God had certainly helped Willie, and he had also most patiently helped himself, and others too; for, as he went to the mill that morning, Mr. Sumner thought often of his small, pale boy. He could not help comparing him with the many strong, robust boys whom he met on their way to school. His conscience told him that much of the puny appearance of his own boy was owing to the want of that very care which it was his business to provide. He could not help wondering if he had always had enough to eat. He had not thought about this before; indeed, for the last two years, he had thought of little but how to provide himself with the means of indulging his vicious habit. From Willie, every member of his neglected family he saw in a long, solemn row, repeating themselves over and over. Lotty, with her soundless words, spoke to him in such beseeching tones—God's messenger. Perhaps he made this child deaf and dumb that the mes-

sage she brought might seem to all to come directly from Himself.

A girl seems nearer a father's heart than a boy ; and this child, so clinging, so dependent, how could he ever have forgotten her! Mr. Sumner's thoughts were full of remorse. He looked sober and sad as he entered the counting-room, and Mr. Ashton noticed it with pleasure. "If the man begins really to repent what he has done," he said to himself, "I shall have much hope of him."

The law business proceeded slowly. Mr. Sumner was industrious and persevering, but not nearly as acute as before he had benumbed his faculties by the use of intoxicating drinks. Mr. Ashton did all he could to assist him, paid him liberally, and promised, if he would give him an undisputed right to the land, a handsome bonus. "If, by any luck," he said, "you could find that old will, how invaluable it would be!"

"What is known of the parents or

friends of this poor widow?" asked Mr. Sumner.

"I know nothing. I am no lawyer; and so long as she told me decidedly that both her brothers were dead, and the will no longer, in all probability, in existence, I gave myself no further trouble in the matter. But, if you think it necessary, the first day I can be spared from my business you and I will drive over, and you may use your lawyer's wit in interrogating her as closely as you please."

"I really can do very little, except to clear away some of this superadded rubbish, until I see what hope there is of that. If the brothers are dead, there is one heir, a girl, you said. We must hunt her up."

So it was agreed upon; and a month was drawing to its close—the first sober month Mr. Sumner had known for years. To whom, under God's blessing—to Mr. Ashton, or to his own son, Willie—did he owe this? Our young readers must decide for themselves. Neither

Mr. Ashton or Willie asked the question. But, eagerly as they watched him, they felt that God was helping them, and that, perhaps, in His infinite goodness, He might have in store days of quiet home-life for the family of the poor, despised drunkard.

VIII.

The Bean-Field.

THE cold, short days of winter were at last over, and in this coming in of the good time no one rejoiced more heartily than the school-children in Belden's Falls. Now there would be a long vacation, and the spring vacation was but another name for such lovely walks, such long and frequent sitting by the little brook-side, which, freed from the bonds which had kept them so closely all the live-long winter, seemed to these children like sympathizing schoolmates just commencing their vacation also. Every new spring came the new young flowers. How easy it was to find them by the stile, in the very middle of the lane, back of Blunt's woods, close by the old cottage, where Black Rose had lived *always*, the children thought! There were those blue-

eyed violets, so large, so sweet, with one tiny drop of dew resting early in the morning upon a falling leaf. What great hands full they gathered there daily, until all the little folks seemed to be turning into violets themselves! The spring-beauty—there it was, clinging to those grey rocks, and tempting the hands that plucked it to build houses, and castles, and forts, and even whole cities around on those shelves and wide crevices. They could wade into the wet meadow for the yellow cowslip. What did they care for wet feet? This was the greatest sport of all, and the deeper in the merrier the shout. Yes, this vacation was the happiest time of all the happy year; for every thing was budding, fresh and green. It was nature's childhood, and was only a part of the great child-world. James and Willie had studied hard. They were glad of rest and change. James was delighted to have a time for free sport, and Willie a time for mill-work. How much he would earn! He even hoped to

put up a little for that coming college-life. To his great disappointment, when he asked leave of Mr. Ashton, he said, very decidedly, *No;* that he needed change, play, recreation, and that he should feel as if he were doing a wrong thing to allow him to shut himself up in the close air of a factory, when he needed the sun and the air as much as the flowers did. Willie tried to bear the disappointment like a man; but, after all, he was only a boy of eleven, and he had to wipe the tears away many times, in order to see clearly the path as he went slowly home. To his surprise he found James there waiting for him. James' face looked so happy, that poor Willie, as he looked at it, could not help wondering why God had made him so well and happy and rich, while He had not only taken away the vigor of his boyhood, but had given him poverty and much sorrow to contend with. But these feelings had hardly put themselves into words in Willie's mind before he became con-

scious how wrong they were; and they were hardly conceived before they were followed by an earnest prayer for forgiveness, and for help to be saved from being an envious child.

James was too full of his own happiness to notice the changes in Willie's face, which indicated his changes of feeling, so he said, abruptly:

"I meant to have got here earlier, Willie, to save you going over to our house, for I knew the very first idea that would come into your head would be that of going to work; and father said you mustn't have any more, in doors, when the birds were calling you so loud to come out. But he says," and here James' face lit up with *such* a happy smile, "that he will give you and me the rent of that acre of bean-lot, over on the side of Chipman's Hill, and will pay us two dollars a bushel for every bushel of beans we raise upon it. What do you think of that, man; is not it a lot better than making paper bed-quilts? Why, we shall

be farmers, sons of the soil, men full grown, ready to assume the responsibilities of life, and to act our part, bear our burdens manfully, and all the rest that Mr. Lane tells us about. I made father promise me he wouldn't tell you a word about it, if he should see you first; and I know, by your long face, that he has kept his word. Come, sir; Jonas has gone round to the field, and there is no time to lose. He is to give us our first lesson this morning. It is all ploughed, and ready."

Now which boy looked the happiest, Willie, or James? As we can not see with our bodily eyes, how shall we decide? Perhaps, after all, there was most of quiet joy in Mrs. Sumner's eye; for she more fully realized how much it would be to her pale, drooping child. Perhaps it might lighten the shadow which fell over him that night, when she stood looking at him in the soft moonlight. Willie was even now tired. The walk to Mr. Ashton's, and the disappointment, had been all that he could

bear. But he was too impatient to rest, though James, with his brotherly care of the frail child, cheated him into many long rests on the sunny side of some old log, as they went to their new work, much preferring that Jonas, never too pleasant, should scold him heartily for being so slow than that he should hear that quick, short breathing of Willie's, which he heard his mother so often regret. When they reached the field, Jonas was so struck by Willie's worn, tired face that he forgot the reproof, which he had hardly been able to reserve until James came, and only said,

"Well, now, sartin, that boy looks like a turnip just dug; he's as white as pop-corn. Your father don't expect to get many beans out of him, I hope?"

"We will see," said James, laughing cheerfully. "Willie left some of his red cheeks between the leaves of his old Latin Dictionary; but we will dig them up, you see if we don't."

"Yes, yes. I dare say," said Jonas, more

gently; "nothing so good for little folks as air and work. I don't think much of your book-larning. My boys are as brown as horse-chestnuts, and stout as young oxen. They are a great team, Ned and Joe, I tell you."

"I know that," said James; "but so are Willie and I. I'll bet you a fourpence that we will raise more beans on the same quantity of land than your boys, after all!"

"Whew!" said Jonas, looking disparagingly at their delicate hands, and whistling contemptuously. "Brag is a good dog, but Hold-fast is better."

"Well, Jonas, for a punishment, you shall measure our beans, when we have gathered them," said James, laughing.

"I'll agree to it, and won't charge your father nothing for the time it takes," said Jonas, with a sly wink. And to work the three went.

Willie was tired. His hoe was heavy, he could hardly move it; he was both slow and

awkward. After all it was not as good as the paper patchwork; for that he could do, and this he could not.

"I am more stupid than Jerry," he said, apologetically, to James.

"Then you are a very hopeful case," said James; "for I heard father telling mother, this very morning, that Pat says Jerry does half as much work as a man, and that he quite depends upon him. So much for stupid Jerry! I could hardly believe it."

Willie was glad when the evening came, and still more glad when Jonas said he could do no more until to-morrow. Everybody was thoughtful for Willie. It is a beautiful way that God has of taking care of those who quietly and uncomplainingly trust Him—to put it into the hearts of so many to do little kind things; to think for, and be tender of those who really need it. Who ever before thought of rough Jonas being careful of any body! and yet now he really planned to do something else,

to ease Willie gradually into hard work. And all that bright, warm spring afternoon he quieted down his discontent at the fact that the ground was not opening to mellow, by the thought that that weak child was at play somewhere; and so Willie was. He had taken Lotty and Warren, and they had gone for the violets; and by some freemasonry, known only to young hearts, James and Lina had come to the same spot for the same purpose. And so beautiful and plenty were the flowers, that the girls had woven small wreaths, and put them upon their heads, Lotty making the woods ring with her discordant but happy laugh, and Lina with her lovely face so bright—brighter and sweeter than were those sweet blue flowers. Warren's chubby hands peeped out from under their load of the greenest leaves, almost like lilies; so, at least, Lina said, as she took his pretty offerings, very much with the air of a flower queen. These were precious days to Lotty, for a new life opened with them to her. When Willie was

at school, she was confined closely at home. Her mother hardly dared permit her to go to the old tree, that grew so near the house; for the unfenced yard offered her no protection, and she was very tender of this helpless one. But when Willie was at home, he was never tired of walking with her—of taking her to the prettiest places; and, though Lotty could not hear the birds sing, they were to her what the white clouds in the blue sky are to us, full of the silent beauty of motion, between heaven and earth, but much nearer that pure home than here! No one can tell the silent beauty which God has spread all over this world, but those to whom only this is revealed. And certainly, as this group of children sat round upon the springing grass, Lotty's face told of as much deep enjoyment as the others gave expresssion to in words.

The long shadows from those brawny pine trees fell over their play-ground before the party broke up. Willie had a shade more of

life upon his young face, as he went home. His mother saw it, and returned thanks.

The next morning the boys went early to their task. James was fond of every species of practical gardening. "He no longer," he said, "felt like an old horse that was sawing wood in a machine, as he had in the mill. There was something right manly in his work. He could hear and see; he believed he loved every clod of that brown earth; and when the beans fairly came, only think of seeing something grow that you had planted yourself."

Mr. Ashton had wisely regulated the work hours. They were from eight until ten in the morning, and from three to five in the afternoon.

If he had not, the boys would have come home to dinner, and hurried back, every day. But Mr. Ashton was positive; and, as he said he had taken Willie into his employ, he had some errand for him to run, some ride for him to take, or the little girls wanted

to go again and again after those never-fading violets.

Vacation was passing all too quickly. What would become of the beans, when they must go to school? They made many plans for getting up early, for working through the long, soft summer twilight. We shall see how well they kept them.

The last day of vacation they were allowed, as a special favor, a few hours more of work. The heads of the green leaves of those last planted were just peeping up above the ground, and now was the time, Jonas said, to make sure of the weeds. "For every one you destroy now, you kill a hundred by and by," he said; "so work away like troopers." Willie could work "like a trooper." James was not slow in finding it out, and his respect and affection for the boy grew in proportion.

"Father says," said James, while Willie and he were weeding side by side, "that this weeding may be an excellent moral lesson to us, if

we will take it. He says, we want to pull up these things while they are young and tender, before they have spread, or taken deep root. And so with our little faults. If we pull them all up, root and branch, now, we shall have no more trouble with them; but if we let them grow, they will choke us all up, and we shall not produce a good deed, any more than we can raise good beans if they are covered up with dark weeds."

"I was thinking so myself," answered Willie, "as I sat here before you came; and I wondered if God would not help me pull up all my faults, as we pulled up these weeds. Now, you see, James, these weeds could not pull themselves up, neither could the beans push them off; we come and do it. So one of my greatest faults is want of power to break myself of a fault, or bad habit, which I take to be one and the same thing; and, unless God comes and helps me, why they will grow, and grow, and there is the end of my being a minister."

"You are always talking about being a minister, Willie. What is your fancy that way? I can't find out."

"Why, simply to do good, James."

"Do good! I never think of any such thing; I mean, any more than some little kind act, which I can't help doing. But I never plan about being a minister; I want to be something *great*."

"And I something good," said Willie.

"You don't mean to say you had rather be a good man than a great one? Come, now, Willie, own up, honestly!"

"Well, honestly, then," said Willie, "I do not see how being good can keep me from being great; but if I must be of necessity only one, I had rather be a first-rate minister, and win souls, as Mr. Ross says, to Christ, than to be a king, and wear a crown."

"I should not like to be a king, I think," said James, half laughing; "but the president of the United States of America does'nt sound

so unpleasantly to me! I wonder, after all, Willie, what you and I shall make."

"This reminds me," said Willie, "of a talk I once had with Jerry. One day, when we were working all alone at the mill, I asked him what he meant to *make*, when he was a man; and, after waiting a long time, he said, "'Well, now, I am a thinking I'll make a sled.'" I tried to explain to him that it was what he was to be, and at last came to the conclusion that, mayhap, if he was very smart, Patrick would let him tend a loom."

Both the boys laughed. James thought weeding beans a great deal better fun, and so did Willie. Indeed, if a profession had not seemed to them a necessity for boys who studied Latin, perhaps the clear, buoyant air, the gay, glad freedom of an out-of-doors life might have won both their hearts to the farmer's side. As it was, farming was only a means to an end. James wanted his money, in order to feel that he had earned something of his

own ; and Willie—we all know what Willie wanted his for. Mr. Ashton came out to-day to make them a call. He had watched the bean-field more as an indication of the boys' characters than for any great desire to have a large crop of beans. He had been at some pains to devise this healthy way of helping Willie, and he offered a price which, even with a fair return for their trouble, would pay them handsomely. But what gave him most pleasure was the industry and perseverance they had both shown. Being strictly in accordance with his taste, James had never wearied, never required, as he had at the mill, to be forced to go ; he only complained that he was allowed to work so little. Even Jonas confessed that the boys had done right smart, his own lads couldn't have beaten them. And when James asked him if he would still promise to measure their beans for nothing, he laughed, and said he was perfectly willing to leave it to Mr. Ashton ; he was a mighty just man. And so

closed the last day of this happy, well-spent vacation. When Willie went into school the first morning, Mr. Lane's salutation was,

"Ah! Willie, vacation has done you a world of good. Why, you look like a different boy. I shall let you dig away at your books with much more pleasure this term."

"I am as strong, almost, as James," said Willie, "and have grown half an inch. Mother says she thinks, if I would be a farmer's boy, I might make a healthy man; but I must be a minister, sir, I am sure I must."

X.

The Disappointment.

THE next event of much importance to the progress of our story was the long projected visit of Mr. Ashton and Mr. Sumner to the widow, in order to investigate the unsettled claims upon the land Mr. Ashton was so anxious to purchase. Mr. Sumner had not been away from home for several years, and the occasion was one of much solicitude and bustle to him and his family. He had, with his wife's careful planning been able to buy the new coat of which he stood so much in need. And as his habits for several months had been perfectly sober, he really began to assume again the appearance and the manner of a gentleman. What was better still, he began to have hope in his heart—hope that he should be able finally, with Mr. Ashton's help, to be a gentleman. Not an idle, lazy one, for

no true gentleman can be that; but an active, enterprising, useful, valued member of the community in which he lived. So Mrs. Sumner hoped; but *her* trust was first in God, and afterward in Mr. Ashton.

There was a feeling of the old pride in her heart, which she thought shame and sorrow had long since eradicated. She was surprised to find it still there. When all dressed and ready, her husband stood waiting for the carriage which was to take him away. Even Lotty seemed conscious that there was quite an epoch opening before the family; for, climbing up in her father's lap, she passed her hand approvingly over the shining new coat, and uttered a succession of her wild, happy laughs. Her look of grief and surprise, as she saw her father go away, was the last thing he saw. As he looked back from the wagon to say good-bye once more, it was a great comfort to him—poor, fallen man that he was—to find that this stricken, abused child loved him still.

Sixty miles is not a great distance by cars; but Mr. Ashton wished to make it as much of an excursion as possible to his companion. So they drove leisurely on, and did not reach their stopping-place until quite late on the following night. The next morning their first business was to hunt up the old lady, whom they found living alone in a small house on the outskirts of the town. She evidently was not much used to company, or very desirous of it; for the reception she gave them had in it such a mixture of bashfulness and coldness, that she might easily have rid herself of less determined guests. But, taking their seats entirely uninvited, Mr. Ashton entered at once upon the object of their visit.

"So, so," said the good lady, looking at them most attentively after she had heard their story; "you think you'll come here and get all you can out of me, and then go away and get the land for sartin, do you? I tell you what, I haven't lived so long and suffered all this for

nothing; and I will inform you, to start with, that I haven't a word to say about the matter, and that if you sit there twenty years, you may just do it. You will be none the wiser for it."

It was in vain that Mr. Ashton informed her who he was, and that his intention was to see her claims made good, not broken. It was wasting words; for, after finishing her first speech, she quietly had taken her knitting and seated herself, and not one syllable could they draw from her. She even refused to tell them the name of the minister of the parish, and they were obliged to take their leave and hunt him up elsewhere.

Mr. Ashton was exceedingly amused by the whole occurrence, but Mr. Sumner was suspicious that his own personal appearance had much to do with the old lady's belief in their imposition. It conveyed to him a silent reproof, which, after all, showed an increasing tenderness of conscience. The minister was

out of town, and would be absent some weeks. What could they do? Whatever inquiries they made respecting the character of the widow only made their case seem more hopeless to them; for every one said "she was very odd, and noted for keeping her own counsel." And some of the more knowing ones advised the gentlemen to return to their homes without any delay, for the good woman had never been known to change her mind since she had lived in town. Mr. Ashton, however, persevered a few days longer, going sometimes alone, and sometimes sending Mr. Sumner, but always with the same result. The old lady took her knitting-work, and, fastening her eyes upon it, never by look or word indicated her knowledge of any other living being beside herself being in the room.

"If I could only ascertain who her father and who her brothers were!" said Mr. Sumner, in despair, one morning, after spending two hours in useless cross-questioning. "This is

the rarest law-case of which I ever heard. Our trouble is generally to make our clients keep still, and here is one who can not by any inducement be made to open her mouth. The woman is either very wise or a fool."

At last, during one morning's visit, Mr. Ashton, as a means of passing the time, took up an old Bible, which lay upon a small light stand by the fireplace. When the widow saw him do this she gave a significant groan, as if she was delighted at having driven him to such profitable employment.

Turning the leaves slowly over, he came at last to that family record which is so often inserted between the leaves of the Old and New Testament. There, sure enough, written in a distinct, old-fashioned hand, were the names of the whole family, from the grandmother to one only grandchild. Her marriage, too, was recorded.

"How is this?" said Mr. Ashton, starting. "Here is your wife's name, and your own:—

'Mary Loring, married to William Sumner, August 8th, 1830.' 'Mary Loring, daughter of Warren and Charlotte Loring, born September 4th, 1810. Warren Loring—'"

"Stop, stop," said Mr. Sumner, breathlessly. "My wife's father was then one of this lady's brothers. Let us look at it carefully. Here, begin with the grandmother."

It is almost impossible to tell what effect this disclosure had upon the widow. Turning pale and red by turns, she slowly rose from her chair, and, laying her hand upon Mr. Sumner's shoulder, said,

"You are then William Sumner. God bless or curse you, according to the use you shall this day make of the knowledge you have acquired."

"We have been put in possession of this in a most singular manner," said Mr. Ashton. "My good lady, God has certainly overruled your extreme carefulness in a decided way. It seems to me it would now be in accordance

with the plainness of His purpose, if you should give to your nephew something more of the affectionate reception due from an aunt."

"If he is good and worthy of it, God bless him," said the aunt, a little more gently. "But what I used to hear of him was none of the best; and, mayhap, God intends to try me still more, by sending him with his family to be a burden to me all my few remaining days."

Mr. Sumner had been, years ago, a man of spirit; but there is nothing that takes this out of a person like guilt. Now he stood abashed before this new-found relative. Not a word had he to offer in reply to her openly expressed reproof. There had been times, and those only a few months ago, when his family had been needy enough to come upon her for support; and how could he repel the suggestion now?

Mr. Ashton read what was passing in his mind, from his downcast face. He really pitied him, and hastened to say,

"That he could promise that, while he lived, Mr. Sumner would not willingly become a burden to her; and, if she once knew Mrs. Sumner and the children, he thought she would soon forget how lonely she had been in the world."

"Mayhap," she said, submissively; "but God had a way of seeing different from what we mortal folks did, and if He meant her to live out her days poor and alone, it was His will, and she was content."

Years of living alone seemed to have had a benumbing effect upon Mrs. Barbour's mind, as well as upon her heart. Her husband had died many long, long years ago. She was childless, defrauded, relationless, so far as she knew; and thus she had eked out her subsistence from day to day, by the aid of her knitting-needles and the strictest economy.

Mrs. Sumner had lost sight of her. Indeed, she had been hardly in a situation to look up any friends for years, and so they seemed to

have naturally forgotten each other's existence. And now, after conversing with her for some hours, Mr. Sumner came to the conclusion that whatever he really found out that was to the point, must come from the remembrance of his own wife. Mr. Ashton and himself, therefore, took their leave, promising to keep Mrs. Barbour informed of whatever should tend to the final settlement of her affairs.

"I do not see, Mr. Sumner," said Mr. Ashton, as they drove leisurely home, "but what, in the end, this affair becomes yours, your wife being heir to whatever Mrs. Barbour leaves; so you must make the best bargain you can out of me."

"That is rather a new thing to ask a lawyer to do," said Mr. Sumner, smiling. "He is generally expected to make the best *for* you."

"In this particular instance, I am willing to waive that claim in favor of my young friend Willie," answered Mr. Ashton. "Only, I must confess, while I am ready for all that is fair

and honest, I should like to be sure, if I am to pay a very large price, that it will come to your family in the end, and not, by a freak of a very freakish old lady, go to some twenty-ninth cousin."

"I think it will be the part of wisdom not to expect too much, then there will be no disappointment. At any rate, I will see to it that my professional services are rendered to you with as much probity as if the twenty-ninth cousin were already in possession. The first thing now to do is to find that will. My wife may have it among some of her father's old papers. She is so orderly, we shall soon know whether it is in her keeping or not."

That was a very pleasant ride home. Mr. Ashton, always hopeful, felt quite sure that the land he so much desired would soon be honestly his, and that by becoming its purchaser, he should benefit the family in whom he was so much interested. And Mr. Sumner, in spite of his protestation to the contrary, and his

sincere desire to do his duty, simply and only, had some very cheering thoughts of his family never, never—let him err however much he might—suffering for the common necessaries of life again.

It had been a happy morning when he left home. It was a happy meeting when, with so much of the old smile upon his face, he once more took his little deaf and dumb child up in his arms and gently covered her tiny hand with his, as she still smoothed the new coat, with the half consciousness that it was, even more than when she saw it last, the harbinger of good.

Mrs. Sumner was very much surprised by the intelligence which her husband communicated as soon as they were alone together. She had but seldom seen her aunt, Mrs. Barbour, and what few recollections she had of her were not much in her favor. Her brother, Mrs. Sumner's father, married a lady against whom Mrs. Barbour conceived a violent prejudice, so

that the families had, during his wife's lifetime, but little intercourse; and, when left alone with his only child, Mr. Loring had shown no desire to have her come either under the influence or authority of her aunt. Mrs. Barbour had been informed by letter of her brother's death, soon after its occurrence, and since then no communication had taken place between the families. Mrs. Sumner had never heard her father speak of any will belonging to his father, or, indeed, of any property which had been left to any of the children; but yet, it was possible such an instrument did still exist, and was safely laid away among her father's papers in the old hair-trunk. To-morrow they would look over its contents carefully. It was a point which could soon be settled.

Willie was hardly awake, the next morning, when his father came in to commence the search. He was very curious to know what it might all mean, but he was not accustomed to ask questions very freely of his father. So

he waited until he found his mother alone. Nor was his wonder at all abated, when she informed him that his father was looking for his great-grandfather's will, and that, as the rest was private business, he must make no further inquiries. Mr. and Mrs. Sumner had decided, the previous night, that it would be best to keep Willie in ignorance of the whole affair, in order not to excite in him too sanguine hopes with regard to the future. Mr. Sumner was not privy to Willie's plans of going to college, and becoming a minister. He had not yet shown sufficient interest in his children to deserve the confidence.

Willie now, with the sensitiveness peculiar to delicate children, kept away from his room while the search was proceeding; but he felt that he knew so much more of the contents of the trunk than any one else, that he might be useful if they would allow him to be.

It must be confessed that at school Willie's thoughts often wandered from his books to

the old trunk. It seemed to him to contain so many treasures peculiarly his own, that he almost felt as if some sacred personal rights were being invaded, and was not the less troubled when, on making a hasty visit to his room on his returning from school, he found his father still there, and the papers scattered in sad confusion all over the floor.

"Here is work for you, to-night, Willie," said his father. "When you come from school, you may gather these all up and put them back, just as they were. You have been here so often, your mother says, you know all about it."

"Yes, sir," said Willie, delighted at the prospect of restoring things again to their original condition. "May I begin now?"

"No, not until night. So far I have had my labor for my pains. But here is a little hope left yet," lifting two unopened packages; "what I want may be here."

But no, the last paper was unfolded and no will. There were bills from Mr. Loring's youth

to his death, all neatly filed and arranged, but nothing else. Mr. Sumner recommended to his wife that they should all be put into the fire, when he had concluded his search; but they were precious in her sight, and were remanded back to their hiding-place. Willie was busy until a late hour, working with a right good-will, but, notwithstanding, was both tired and sleepy when the whole was done, and he might go to bed.

Mr. and Mrs. Sumner were both of them more disappointed than they had any reason to suppose they should be, when the prospect of finding the will became hopeless. To Mr. Sumner it made an end of an important and interesting law case; and to Mrs. Sumner it dashed the bright hopes which, in spite of her better judgment, she was beginning to entertain, that the future of her family might, at no very distant day, be better provided for than their past had been. Nor was Mr. Ashton without his share in the disappointment.

Even old Mrs. Barbour heard of the failure to discover the will with more than usual expressions of regret. "It wasn't so much matter for herself," she said, "for the land had always been a thorn in her flesh—a matter of discipline,—but, if she once could get hold of it, for sure and certain, it might do some one else good after she was gone." Willie, too, boy he was, felt that something had gone wrong, though, thanks to the discretion of his parents, it threw no shadow across that shining path which led him up, up to that happy minister life.

XI.

The Unexpected Visitor.

MR. ASHTON had felt much concern as to the effect which the failure in this first law case for years might have upon Mr. Sumner, so had his wife, and both exerted themselves to their utmost to make it appear a matter of very slight importance. Mr. Ashton found occupation for him as treasurer of the Mills, a post of trust and responsibility which he knew Mr. Sumner very well capable of filling if he would remain sober. Mrs. Sumner spent the money which he earned in the most advantageous manner. Already there was a greater air of comfort about the house. She had purchased a new rocking-chair, which always stood inviting Mr. Sumner to rest when he came home tired from his day's work. A new cover hid the painted table, and a neat ward

robe, into which the "turn-up bed" was snugly stowed away, gave quite a parlor-like look to the small room. The children, too, were better dressed, and far better fed. Even Willie began to lose the pointed look so indicative, in a child, of worn sensibility, and to appear and act like other boys. In truth, everything had so improved that life seemed a different thing to Mr. Sumner. He began to feel as if he was earning a right to be a man once more; and, as he became more steady in business, he found to his surprise that he had really more time for home cares, and that he could easily do many things by which Willie's frail strength nad been before exhausted. The time which Willie thus gained was spent to the best purpose, for, instead of chopping wood, he could run to the bean-field, and there James and himself always found plenty to do. How beautifully — yes, really beautifully — those young green leaves looked to them, as they first unfolded! How they watched the formation of

every pod! And now, as summer was wearing on, how they would have carried pails of water from the falls to water every root, for fear of that long August drought! So passed another term of study—the happiest Willie had ever known during the whole of his short, troubled life. As the evenings began to lengthen, and he could sit down quietly with his light to his books, he seemed to himself to be making almost double progress in his studies; though it is very doubtful whether he was really advancing as fast as he did when, within the long soft twilight, he could spend those very hours at work in his bean-field.

The fall vacation would be just the season to gather those treasures in. Willie, in some of his waking dreams, spent the money he should thus earn,—one day, in buying a handsome new dress for his mother, in which she should look, oh! so neat and pretty! Then he remembered poor Lotty, who never had a warm cloak, or bright hood, as other little girls had, in

her whole life. She might go to church if she had them; and how pleased and proud he should be to lead her in! How her soft eye would brighten with astonishment at every new thing she saw and did! and how God would love to see this poor stricken lamb gathered in with the rest of His flock! Warren, too, was almost large enough to go to school,—only he would need new stout boots if he did. What a nice thing it would be to buy them, and draw them on to the child's feet himself! What a man it would make of him at once! and how very smart the child himself would feel! As for the baby, she was still little, and all her wants her mother supplied, even before the child was conscious of them herself. And then, crowding in and pushing out everything else, came that expensive college life, and the mine of wealth which it would require before he could earn anything for himself. Every cent must be saved for these bills, or he, in the end, should never be able to assist the family in the sub-

stantial way which was among the pleasant things of the future. Never was a boy more happy in possibilities than Willie was now. Everybody who saw the bean-field pronounced it doing finely, and so of course it must be. There was to be only a private examination at the close of this term. In this James and Willie acquitted themselves quite as well as in the public ones; and Mr. Lane dismissed them with the warmest commendations. He told them that their good behavior had given tone and character to the whole school; that teaching was much easier where the boys helped, and they had helped him in right good earnest; that he was proud of, and well pleased with them. This was a pleasant way to begin vacation. Mr. and Mrs. Ashton felt that James's success was owing, in a great measure, to the influence which Willie had over him. He was a steady, faithful boy, and had, beside, those noble and generous traits which are the tie of brotherhood between boys.

Mrs. Ashton often spoke of him to James as a *Christian child.* James could not exactly see why Willie was any more of a Christian than he was himself. He always tried to obey, to speak the truth, never forget to pray at night; and on Sunday, refrained from playing, or reading such books as he read in week days. Yet, notwithstanding all this, James felt that there was a real difference between them. And he many times puzzled over it without being able to decide what it was.

The motto, "Win and Wear," seemed to be a great favorite with Willie. James wondered if that contained a secret meaning he had been unable to discover. And one day, after his mother had been unusually earnest in her praise of Willie, he determined, the first time he and Willie were alone together, he would have a good long talk with him, and find out just what it did all mean. This opportunity he was sure would occur while they were harvesting their beans.

Jonas, at last, after much entreaty from the boys, appointed a day on which to commence this important business. It was one of those soft September days, when every thing looks golden. The rich autumn sun gilded the trees, the shrubs, the fading grass, and even the very stone walls, as they passed along. They were both in high spirits; and Lotty and Lina were, by special permission, to make part of the party, help them pick the pods, and perhaps even be allowed to turn out their shining white contents into that capacious measure which Jonas had brought with them.

What a happy company they were! One would almost have thought their laughs would have rung down into their parents' homes—perhaps they did. At any rate, the golden sunshine was not all on the fields. It brightened up Mrs. Sumner's small neat house, and glanced over the gold-sprigged paper in Mrs. Ashton's parlor, as if it could add its cheerfulness even to that happy home.

Lotty's tiny hands were soon the busiest of them all. She was rapidly becoming useful in many little ways. Deprived of hearing and speech, her eyes did double duty. She seemed to learn much faster than other children what she could see done, and to have a natural power of doing it at once and handily. Lina loved play too well to work much; but, if she did not work, she was the life of the whole. She said ten words for every pod she picked, and only laughed louder and longer than any of the others, when she found, at the end of the first hour, that her small basket was not half filled. And then she began to grow tired, and insisted that it was luncheon time; and she must go and spread the table under the old oak tree, by the stile. And, with the language of signs, into which she threw so much of her own superabounding life that they seemed to possess more power than dull words, she tempted Lotty away with her. So the children, assuming as demurely as Lina could the re-

sponsibilities of woman life, spread the table under the dancing shadows of the broad green leaves, and put the brown acorns around each piece of bread and butter, "to make a white plate with a brown border." Then calling the boys, they forgot the beans in the nice luncheon which Mrs. Ashton's kindness had provided.

They could hardly believe it was dinner-time, when Jonas told them he had heard his wife's horn for his dinner. And as Jonas positively refused to measure the beans more than once a day, and that at night, they very reluctantly went to their own homes. As Willie and Lotty came in sight of theirs, they were astonished by seeing an old stage-coach, which rumbled by once a week, drive up to their door and stop. Lotty hung back; she wanted to be sure what had happened, before she ventured any further. But not so Willie; he could not wait to reach home to know, but, running up a hill near by, could see distinctly whatever should occur.

"I am sorry that I cannot immediately recall your name. Your face is certainly familiar to me."

Win and Wear. p. 203.

The driver was a long time at the door of the stage, evidently helping somebody or something, out and at length Willie saw a little old woman, dressed in black, with both hands so full of bundles that she had to be assisted out by her elbows. She tottered along a few steps, then stopped to direct the taking down of a queer-looking box. It seemed all the colors of the rainbow to Willie, as he looked at it from the distance. Having finally adjusted every thing to her satisfaction, he saw her drop a little courtesy, and then turn to the door. She did not knock, Willie felt sure, but opening the door, went directly in. Seizing Lotty's hand, Willie ran home as quickly as he could, and was just in time to hear the following dialogue.

"I am sorry," said his mother, apologetically, "that I cannot immediately recall your name. Your face is certainly familiar to me."

"That is more than I can say of your face,

though I know your name well," replied the old lady; "so, by your leave, I will take off my bonnet, and make myself a little at home."

Mrs. Sumner immediately assisted her to take off her bonnet and shawl, and, seating her in Mr. Sumner's rocking-chair, began to call after Willie to bring more wood, in order to brighten the blaze into a cheerful welcome for this unexpected, unknown guest.

When Willie made his appearance, he attracted the visitor's eyes at once from the careful survey they were making of the room and its appurtenances.

"So this is Willie," she said cheerfully to him, as he came forward, holding out his hand. "William Sumner, I suppose; I never could see the use of nick-names. If the boy was christened William, why not say so, and be done with it."

"Because Willie is shorter and prettier, we think," suggested Mrs. Sumner. "But I see

you do know our names; may I request now the pleasure of being told yours?"

"Mighty polite you are, for sartin," answered the old lady; "perhaps it won't give you so much pleasure, when you really find it out. Where is your husband?"

"Up at the mill, in Mr. Ashton's office."

"Oh! oh! so he does pretend to do something sometimes? I heard he was a—"

Mrs. Sumner stopped her instantly. "Whoever you are," she said politely, but firmly, "you will remember that he is the father of these children, and my husband."

"A little quick-tempered! Well, she a'n't none the worse for that, that I know of. The Lorings always had a temper of their own."

"May I ask again who you are?" demanded Mrs. Sumner, more resolutely.

"Yes, nothing to hinder you that I know on," perversely answered the visitor; "whether I shall tell you, is quite another thing. But there is one thing I will tell you; I am hungry,

and kind of faint, and should like a cup of strong tea, real hot. I never drink any thing lukewarm."

Mrs. Sumner stood for a moment irresolute; but Willie whispered, "Mother, I think it is old Mrs. Barbour, that old aunt of yours that father went to see."

"My little boy says," said Mrs. Sumner, a smile of welcome immediately lighting up her whole face, "that you are my aunt, Mrs. Barbour. If you are, you must let me kiss you, and tell you how heartily glad I am to see you here."

The old lady got up and held out her hand with a look of real happiness gleaming over her sallow and wrinkled face. "I am," she said, "Aunt Barbour—old, cross, queer Aunt Barbour. Don't be very glad to see me, because I didn't expect you to be, and I am very hard to get along with. So only treat me kindly, and let me stay a little while; for I have had a great longing to come, since your

husband was at our house, and see with my own eyes what that great man of yours calls so perfect, as he does you and yourn. And now I will take my tea, and then see your children, niece Mary, if it won't vex you."

While Willie and his mother went immediately at work to provide the desired tea, Mrs. Barbour leaned her head back in her chair, and closed her eyes. She seemed very tired, and no doubt was; but she was not too tired to have many busy thoughts revolving in her mind, the result of which we shall learn by and by.

And Mrs. Sumner too had busy thoughts, but not of the pleasantest kind. She was, as she had said, glad to see her relative; but, in the small house which they occupied, could not imagine where she should put her to sleep, or what she should do with her during those days and nights when the want of means to keep an extra fire compelled all the family to use one room. Willie was thinking over the same

thing, and, as soon as mother and son were alone together, they began to plan. Willie asked if his great-aunt could not occupy his room.

"And where will you go?" asked his mother.

"Oh! any where. I can go into the closet under the stairs; or—I have it mother, splendidly—I can go into that little bedroom father began to part off from the kitchen."

It may be well to inform our readers that the house consisted only of two lower rooms, and, as no partition had ever been put between the rooms of the second story, one long chamber. Between the kitchen and the sitting-room there had been originally two large closets. These, in one of his half-drunken fits, Mr. Sumner had intended to convert into a bedroom. But, having ruined the closets, he had done no more to it; nor would he even allow his wife to remove the rubbish which still remained there, he growing very angry,

and seeming to consider it a reproof of his indolence, whenever the subject was mentioned. So Mrs. Sumner, daily inconvenienced by the want of her closet, and gaining nothing in bedroom, had ordered the wardrobe made for her bed, and allowed the crib occupied by Lotty and the baby to stand in open view.

Now Willie's proposal involved speaking about that closet again to her husband, and she really dreaded it. Still she went cheerfully about preparing the tea, and pretty soon placed a neat-looking table before the old lady, and proceeded to waken her.

Mrs. Barbour allowed herself to be awakened as if she had really been asleep ; then made a hearty meal, and noticed how very white and nice the cloth was upon her table, and how her china shone.

"Now," said she, having finished, "I want to see the children." Lotty had been sitting quietly in her little chair, never so much as once taking her eyes off from the old lady

since she came in. And the old lady had looked at her, had seen the shadow which was cast over her, but could not understand from whence it fell. Willie went again through a formal introduction. Lotty, with a few explanatory words from her mother, laid her soft hand in her old aunt's, and looked up into those dimming eyes with such a mute appeal for love, that if that aged heart had been, in those lonely years of living alone, turned to stone, it would have been softened, at least enough to take the dumb child in.

"Poor thing! poor thing!" said the old lady, more gently than she had spoken before. "She will be saved lots of trouble in this world, after all, for the Bible says the tongue is an unruly member."

Master Warren was not in the best of humors. He had been astride the rainbow-colored box, from which eminence he had been immediately taken off by his aunt; and this was all the notice she had taken of him. The

baby, too, had crowed, and cried, and laughed, and stared, but all to no purpose. Mrs. Barbour had wonderful eyes,—capable of seeing, and not seeing, at the same time. This the children learned pretty thoroughly afterwards. She now bestowed upon each one of them some little mark of attention—lifting the baby into her lap, and giving her her old spectacle case to play with, while Warren was allowed to kick his heels against her chair, during his mother's absence from the room, without having any notice taken of it.

Mrs. Sumner stole up stairs to make every thing ready there, before her husband's return. She was quite uncertain how he might receive a guest who struck him so far from favorably, and wished to be present in the room all the time during the first evening. Nor was she wrong in her anticipations. Mr. Sumner's temper had been soured by the life which he had led; and, though conscious of deserving it, he did not often forgive the person who ac-

cused him of his misdeeds; and when his first surprise was over at seeing who, so quietly and so much at home, was occupying his rocking-chair, his reception was none of the most cordial. This Mrs. Barbour was not slow to see, and therefore said, bluntly, "You don't want me here, William Sumner. I dare say you are right, for I am old, and cross, and very hard to get along with; but be patient a little for your wife's sake."

There was no resisting this appeal. Mr. Sumner was not bad-hearted, but guilty; and as he looked at his wife, there was a quiet supplication in her eye, which was fast regaining over him its former power. He answered cheerfully, and what was better, heartily, "That his house was small, and his accommodations poor; but such as they were, for his wife's sake, she was welcome to. She had but few friends in this world; too few to receive those who came, unkindly."

How Mrs. Sumner's face thanked him! he

had hardly seen it brighten so for years. And thus a ray of sunshine came with the old widow into the poor cottage. Surely no one expected it, least of all Mrs. Barbour herself.

Mr. Sumner lighted an extra candle that evening. It was a slight attention, but his wife both saw and felt it; and she gathered courage from it to call him out of the room, and consult him with regard to their arrangements for the night. "Willie proposes sleeping in the closet," she said, hesitatingly, "if you have no objections."

"How can he sleep there on a pile of mortar?" answered Mr. Sumner, testily enough. "But," correcting himself, "let me take a light; I will see what can be done."

Mrs. Sumner heard him, in a few moments, making noise enough to insure something being done. And she saw, too, that her aunt's ears were wide open, and that she was wondering at such a noise at that hour of the night. However not a word was said in explanation,

and when it had fairly ceased, Mrs. Barbour expressed her desire to go to her bed.

Mrs. Sumner had been dreading the exposure of their poverty, which the unfinished looks of the room up stairs must make; but she had long since learned to take these things submissively, so she lighted the candle, and, without a word of apology, prepared to show her guest to her room. As they reached the foot of the stairs, however, the old lady stopped short.

"Niece Mary," she said, "I have never mounted a stair to sleep these fifty years, and I can't do it to-night, if you have a corner in which you can put me down stairs. Let me sleep in your kitchen, or any where. I won't make you any trouble. But I am old, and cross, and hard to live with, you know, so you had better humor me when you can."

Now what was to be done? Mrs. Sumner cast a troubled look at Willie, who was following with his aunt's bundle in his arms, and

his answer was so prompt, that it quite surprised her. "Go up stairs yourself, mother, with the children, and let Aunt Barbour have your room; it will be nice and warm for her, you know, and so convenient."

"That is a very good plan," said his mother. "I wonder it had not occurred to me before. We can all be in that great room up stairs together, and no need of the closet." Now it was Willie's turn to look troubled, for if they were all in together, what would become of those early and late hours which had always been so peculiarly his own? He was really ashamed of it afterwards, when he remembered how annoyed he had felt. There was nothing to do now but to return to the room, and make the proposed changes in the quietest way they could. And so, to the visitor's no small amazement—for she had been for some time prying around with her eyes for down-stair bedrooms—the wardrobe doors were opened, and a nice comfortable bed soon stood ready for her.

She was anxious to keep Lottie and the baby with her, but Lottie refused by so many significant shakes of the head, that her mother knew it would be in vain to attempt to urge her. So, making her arrangements as rapidly as possible for the night, the whole family were soon quietly at rest, all sleeping but Mrs. Sumner, who was busy revolving over and over again in her own mind what this strange visit might portend, and how, with their limited means, they could support even for a short time another member of their family. There were so many little economies which she could practise when alone, but should be entirely prevented from doing now; so many minutes in which she has tried to compress the work of an hour, which of necessity now must be given to the entertainment of her guest. What could she do—what but *trust?* This was no new lesson to her. She had learned it well; and so she went to sleep, with pleasant thoughts of her unexpected guest.

XII.

Trials.

THE next morning, when Mrs. Sumner went into the kitchen, she found her aunt up, dressed, her room in perfect order, a fire burning in her stove, and one also partly kindled in the cooking-stove.

"I thought," she said, apologetically, as Mrs. Sumner entered, "you would not mind my stirring about a little, as I am so used to it at home. If I had only known your way better, I could have had your meal all ready by the time you were up. Now, if you can spare some time and patience just to show me how, another time you can be taking up the children while I am getting breakfast."

How kind and cordial she seemed! Mrs. Sumner recurred to her troubled thoughts of last night, and wondered if God had already

answered her prayer for help. She had been so long accustomed to doing everything for herself, that to have assistance from one who really understood how to do, was a new life to her. Aunt Barbour had not lived alone so many years, to be helpless now. She soon contrived to *do* what was to be done, and even drew out the rocking-chair for Mrs. Sumner while she was dressing the baby.

Mrs. Sumner did not offer the slightest objection to anything she chose to do. She saw immediately that the best and happiest manner of living with Aunt Barbour was, to let her have her own way; and certainly, when that was as considerate a one as this of the morning, it was no very difficult task. Willie found, too, that he could help his aunt quite as readily as his mother, only he must do the very thing, and nothing else, that he was bidden to do. When Mr. Sumner came down, he felt, without knowing why, that the domestic wheels were moving very easily. He was glad

that, for his wife's sake, he had been kind the previous night.

"Mary," he said to his wife, just before going to the mill, "I think we can afford to have that bedroom finished now, and we really need it for Mrs. Barbour. It is too much for you to go up stairs to sleep with all the children. I will send masons around to-day, if you think best."

Mrs. Sumner made no objections. It seemed like really taking a step up in the world, which was none the less pleasant because hitherto all had been down.

Aunt Barbour trotted about the house until she made herself acquainted with every part of it. "Niece Mary," she said, as she came down from up stairs, "that great garret of a room is no place for your baby these cold nights. I see now that I have taken your sleeping room. To-night I will try some other quarters." Thus appealed to, Mrs. Sumner told her the plan about the closet; and now, having

explained the noise of last night, the next thing Mrs. Sumner heard was the broom, sweeping away the dust and lime from the room, with the energy of twenty instead of seventy.

At length the door was opened, and Mrs. Barbour's wrinkled face made its appearance in the opening. "I tell you what, Niece Mary," she said, "this is the nicest little room that ever was built. I never thought when I seemed to be driven away by such a longing after you and your children from my old home, that I should light on such a pretty nest as this. And then, there is Willie, too. The Lord be praised, the Lord be praised!"

Mrs. Sumner could not restrain a smile. "I am sure, Aunt Barbour, it is only because you are so good and kind that makes every thing seem so pleasant; you are just one of those persons that make 'the desert rejoice and blossom as the rose.'"

"Cross, and old, and hard to live with," said

Mrs. Barbour, cheerily, as she again closed the door and resumed her work.

Mr. Sumner was this time as good as his word; and when the children came home from the bean-field at noon, they found two men busily at work fitting up the new bedroom. Willie had told James and Lina all about their guest when he had been at work with them; and Lotty, bending over, and trying to make wrinkles in her rosy cheeks, had tried to tell them, in her language, just how the old aunt looked. James said he would call after dinner for Willie, that he might have a peep at her; and Lina, though it made the walk considerably longer, insisted upon coming too. Willie felt slightly troubled, for though these children would not willingly do a disrespectful thing, there was something so very funny in Aunt Barbour's looks, he was afraid they would not be able to help it. He whispered his fears to his mother, but she assured him she could not see, herself, anything to laugh at, and did not

think they would. Willie determined to be all ready so as to make the call as short as possible, and accordingly James found him at the door. "Don't laugh, James," he said, softly, "for she is as good, mother says, as she is funny; try to be polite and sober, won't you?"

"Sober as a judge," said James, drawing down his face. "I defy you to make me smile." Lina caught hold of Willie's hand; she was half afraid, the preparation was so formidable. Aunt Barbour was much too busy to notice the little new-comers; indeed, to children generally she had rather an antipathy. So the call was got nicely through, and the children's tongues were very busy discussing the old aunt, most of the afternoon.

There was now a whole week of bright sunshiny days. This first golden one was but a type of six others, all so warm, so cheerful, so laden with rich harvesting, that Willie felt every night, as he lay down on his nice bed in

the long attic-room, that God was smiling specially on his endeavors to be a minister; that every one of these beautiful days was sent to aid him in his self-appointed task; and that, after all, it might not be so self-appointed, but, as He did Samuel, God might have called another child to minister before Him. And so he would often fall asleep, with that dutiful answer of the young prophet upon his lips, "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

On Saturday night the harvest was over. The beans were all gathered, and Mr. Ashton had them removed to his kitchen in order to have them measured with as much "pomp and circumstance" as was possible. There was to be a meeting of some of the children of the neighborhood, a nice supper, and a variety of pleasant things. Mr. and Mrs. Sumner were both urged to go. Mr. Sumner pleaded business for an excuse. It takes a long, long time to repair a fault, therefore we had better be careful how we commit one. Now it had been

several months since Mr. Sumner had drank one drop of liquor ; but he still felt guilty, and did not like to go into any society. Mrs. Sumner had not been away from home for years, but to-day Willie's eyes asked so lovingly, and Lotty folded up her hands so often in her form of supplication, even Aunt Barbour so insisted that she would have the baby, and take all the care of her whether the mother went or stayed, that at last Mrs. Sumner consented to go ; and a very happy party they made as they went, Warren with them, to Mr. Ashton's.

James and Willie were too impatient, to have the measuring long delayed. So Jonas, with his peck-measure in hand, at last began to "fill in," the boys thought, very slowly. But he said, "Haste only made waste," and would not be hurried.

"One, two, three, four, five bushels, two pecks, two quarts, and one pint, every bean counted at last," said Jonas, rather pompously. Notwithstanding his predictions, he was really

proud of the boys' success, perhaps because he thought it was in part owing to his own patience and skill.

"Eleven dollars and fifty cents, then," said Mr. Ashton, "is due to these boys; and here it is." So saying, he counted out the money upon the table, divided it, took from his pocket two nice new portmonnaies, exactly alike, and put them in their hands.

We all know how they received them. How the color came into James's cheeks, and how pleasure danced in his bright black eye; how very handsome and good he looked, and how dearly his mother loved her boy as she looked at him then. And Willie could only grow pale, and must keep his eyes fast upon the floor, for they are overflowing with happy, thankful tears. And his mother, standing very near him, has almost the feeling that she must put out her hand to sustain him, he looks so pale and drooping, and she remembers the shadow that fell over her that night when he lay sleeping

in the moonlight. "God keep my boy"—she does not repeat it so that mortal ear can hear, but God is listening.

Five dollars and seventy-five cents! How rich Willie felt! What should he do with it, in order to keep it safely against *that* day?

Now commenced the plays in earnest. James was the life and spirit of the whole; and as for Lina, she was perfectly wild with joy. There was "blind man's buff," and "catcher," and "hot cockles," and "Jack, Jack, don't you die in my hand," and "I spy," and others, too numerous to mention. Lotty soon learned them; and even little Warren contrived to take his part, though he was so continually in the way that he was more of a football than anything else. Everybody pitched over him, and so all his fingers and toes were cramped and aching to a degree that required all the manliness he had to restrain his tears, and still he would play on.

By and by, when the children, and parents too, were beginning to be weary, there was

such a nice supper ready for them! and of all the hungry party none needed it more than Willie, for his happiness had made him tired long ago, when the games first began, and he had made every exertion that no one should discover how frail he really was. No one but his mother did; it would have been impossible to have deceived her. And when this very pleasantest of all pleasant afternoons was over, and his mother returned early home, pleading the baby for her excuse, he whispered to her the wish to go too, for "he was a little weary."

Aunt Barbour must be told everything that had happened, when they returned. Mrs. Sumner sent Willie up stairs to rest, and patiently repeated what she thought would interest her aunt; nor was she a little surprised, when at the end of her narration, the old lady said,

"Willie Sumner is going to die. There is none of your angels made to live here upon this arth of ours. Heaven is the place for

them; so, you see, you needn't go to lotting on him too much. 'Taint God's way."

There was an echo of Mrs. Sumner's own foreboding; but what could have given rise to the thought in Mrs. Barbour's mind she could not surmise. She answered, in a meek and sorrowful tone: "It must all be as God wills, Aunt Barbour. He is a precious child, but he belongs to his Father in heaven, as well as to his mother."

"Oh! now, don't be agoing to be cast down by an old woman's croaking," said Mrs. Barbour, changing her own tone at once to that of cheerfulness. "I dare say, before I have been here much longer, I shall find out he has enough of old Adam in him to save him; and, now I think of it, as he has been frolicking the whole afternoon, he might as well have brought in some kindlings for to-morrow morning. I have no doubt it will be forgotten, so I will go and see to it myself;" and, glad of an excuse to hurry away from the sadness she had oc-

casioned, and really wishing to save the child the trouble, she went out and collected what Willie declared "was the finest basket of shavings he ever saw."

That night, long after Willie was fast asleep, his mother rose from her bed and went to his side. He was sleeping as soundly and as sweetly as need be. She touched him, and the warmth of life and health came back, his silent answer to her anxieties. He looked so peaceful and happy, that she felt it was wrong in her to distrust God for a moment; that it was no way to keep her treasure, so to idolize it that she put it before Him. And in her dreams during the rest of the night, she seemed to be walking with him in his manhood, leaning upon his arm, looking up into his loving face for that support which had been denied to her in her husband; but he had on wings, long and white, though they were folded gracefully behind him, and she could only see them glance forth, now and then, like flakes of the purest snow.

During the time of the harvesting the bed room had been progressing, and the day after the celebration at Mr. Ashton's the carpenter pronounced it finished. This was an epoch in the life of the Sumner family, for it introduces their first important change for the better. So they all felt it, and it would have been impossible to count the many visits which were made to it during this first day. And now arose that important question, how were they to get it furnished? Mrs. Sumner had revolved this in her mind many times, but always without approaching any nearer a decision. The expense of making the room was all they could now afford. They must live on yet a little longer as they were at present, and be patient. Mr. Sumner wished to run in debt for what was necessary; but on this point his wife was decided. Never in their days of extremest poverty had she been willing to do this; she certainly should not now. Willie stood by, listening to the discussion, all the

time revolving in his mind a plan of his own. The money which he had just received from his beans was the sum needed. Six dollars, his mother, said would make the room comfortable. He had five dollars and seventy-five cents for his share of the farm profits, and then sixty-two cents which he had earned at the mill; but—but— How much there is sometimes in a little word! Now this *but* contained a great trial to Willie, and as he was not perfect, but like all other children made up of good and bad, he took his cap and went away into the woods, that he might have a chance to think the matter over quietly and thoroughly alone. It was a cloudy day. Great dark clouds hung over the sky like a pall, and an angry wind moaned low and threateningly through the pine woods as he approached them. These were the same woods where he had once sought for Lotty. They had never been pleasant to him since, for they were so associated with the fears and anxieties of that sad morn-

ing. Perhaps it was because his heart was so heavy that he turned to them now. He soon found himself, panting and out of breath, following up the same cart-path he had taken then; and he went on, on, until he had to stop from very weariness. Then he sat down upon an old partly-decayed log, and began carefully turning up with his feet every stone or little stick which lay partly embedded in the long brown slippery pine leaves. If my young readers have noticed at all how they *think*, when they have resolved to do so, they will find it is very much in the same way that they study; that is, fix their mind upon a subject one moment, and the next their thoughts will be wandering, like the fool's eyes, to the ends of the earth. So it was with Willie now. When the suggestion first came to him, he had thought he could decide so much better out in the woods,—alone, and still. Now he was there, and under every stone or chip he found something to amuse or distract him.

Innumerable insects, which had been born and would have died there but for the wandering steps and troubled mood of the boy, crawled up from the fibrous earth, and stretched themselves out, with their long scrawny limbs, and looked up at the child as wondering as himself. And there he sat, counting their varieties, and saying over and over again, as he came suddenly back to the object of his visit there, "But my six dollars. What shall I do? what shall I do?" How quickly James Ashton would have decided. This very moment, if he could only have known how much trouble his young friend was in, how soon he would have come to him, and how cheerfully he would have solved his doubts by giving him his five dollars and seventy-five cents! But, after all, their circumstances were so different, it would be unfair to draw this comparison between the boys. James had never known a want, and had never had a proper wish ungratified. His future was as bright as kind, good parents, wealth, and

health could make it. Willie had never known anything but want,—his wishes were only his greatest necessities; and his future,—oh! it was this future over which he was brooding now. That college course, and his minister life! it seemed to him, as he became more familiar with the moving world around him, to assume just this shape,—the whole of it to lie in the disposal made of that sum, which was the beginning. "If I do," said Willie's kind heart, "keep this money and hoard it up for myself, my mother must live for a long time just as inconveniently as she does now. She is not strong;—ah! well, would she hesitate one moment to give all she had if it would only be the means of doing me a tenth part of the good which my money can do her? Then old Aunt Barlow, how kind and good she is! What a nice little home that would make for her all the rest of her life, poor lonely being that she is! Father, too, I dare say it would encourage him to feel that he had some one to do some-

thing, beside himself." Willie took his cap from off the crumbling log; he would hesitate no longer; he would go right home, and cheerfully, yes, *cheerfully*—that would be very hard, but he would try—would carry the money to his mother for this purpose. "But stop, Willie," said his eager, grasping mind; "if you do that, what is to become of your education? You know very well that you must do everything for yourself. Now show some good common sense, and look ahead a little. Suppose you give all your money, this is only the first of many, many wants. Is it your business to supply them, or your father's? And, even allowing it to be yours, do you really do the most good by giving this paltry sum, or by taking it to acquire the power of doing so much more in the future? Think of that pleasant parsonage to which you are going to take your mother one of these days. You will be a very good son if you succeed in making that a home for her. Don't sacrifice that for this. She

will be old, and need it then. She is young, and can do very well now. Besides, Aunt Barbour came without any invitation, and has a home of her own to which she can go if she is not comfortable here." Willie took off his cap again, and sat down. Ambition, a praiseworthy ambition, and filial affection were waging a close warfare. Now, or then? We often have to settle this point in our lives, and, fortunately for us, we are never called upon to do so alone,—there is always help near if we seek it. Willie was too busily occupied with his hopes and fears to remember this now. He was trying to find his way out of this trial alone. And there he sat, coming no nearer to a decision, but going over and over the same points, until his head and heart both ached, and the long silent hours had glided past, bearing the record of this child's struggle, with so many other tales of human life. Willie knew that he must have been missed from home, and that the dinner hour was near. "There

is no hurry," he said to himself at last; "I can come back and decide this as well another time as now. Mother will be anxious; I had better go home at once."

"You are a coward, Willie Sumner," said his heart. "You know you are only putting off your decision in order to keep and enjoy your money a little longer. You are a selfish, unworthy boy, not fit to be a minister, for you only "honor your father and mother" when it is pleasant and convenient, not when it is a trial."

"Now, Willie Sumner," said his head, "you are a considerate, thoughtful boy, and show sense beyond your years. Never do any thing in a hurry; always look before you leap."

"Win, if you would wear," whispered his heart, as if one adage immediately suggested another. "Do you suppose, Willie, you can ever wear the crown promised to those who save souls, if at the very beginning of your life you commit a selfish action? Don't be

guided now by worldly prudence. Do your duty, and leave the rest to God. He will help you win your station only if you are worthy to wear it."

"Ah! yes," said Willie, falling suddenly upon his knees, "God will help me—God will help me." And then the child laid open before his heavenly Father his young heart, freely, fully. And as he came unto Jesus, He forbade him not, but, putting His hands upon him, He surely blessed him, for Willie had no longer a doubt. His trial had ended. He had been in danger, though he knew it not, of making a hard, selfish man. If, with all the plausible excuses which his head made, it had been victorious, where and when could he have drawn the line which would have marked out accurately what was due to the future, and what to the present? The only right way, after all, is to do our duty to-day, and to leave to-morrow with God. A load had fallen from Willie's heart. His step was

light, his eye brighter, and his pale cheek many shades paler for the struggle he had had. But he was happy now. And when he reached home, finding his mother troubled at his absence, and at his pale, worn face, he called her away and told her all,—how great the trial had been, and how happy he was in the result.

His mother only kissed him—perhaps her heart was so full, she could make no reply; but she took the bright new portmonnaie from his thin hand, and she saw as she took it how the hand trembled. And now came the mother's trial. She fully appreciated all her son had gone through, though she had hardly dared to confess it to herself. She had feared that his eager desire for an education would make him place an undue value upon money, and she had also perceived, with that close watchfulness which nothing but the tenderest affection ever gives, that, gentle and unassuming as Willie seemed, and really was, his success in whatever

he had undertaken had begun to soil the purity of his character with a little taint of self-esteem. He needed—so her close observation told her—the very trial through which he had now passed. Money hoarded, even for a good object, if it is entirely a selfish one, produces selfishness. But doing for others not only moderates this, but places the object we serve high in our estimation.

All this passed quickly through Mrs. Sumner's mind, as she silently took the purse. Willie ran away to finish the neglected morning's work, and his mother, wishing she had some one with whom she could consult, went with a heavy heart back to hers. Aunt Barbour easily discerned that something made her niece uneasy. She did not ask her directly what it was, but she took the baby away from her, and, decoying Lotty, and Warren also, left her to settle the matter quietly with her own heart. Aunt Barbour was every day a wonder to herself, as well as to everybody else. She

had lived so long alone that she had no idea she had so much that was kind and good left in her heart. She came at last to the conclusion that it was not from any merit of her own, but because her "Niece Mary" and the children were such perfect human beings. Even Warren, great, driving, noisy boy as he was, seldom displeased her. When he did, all the punishment he received was a gentle shake, and the words: "You will never make such a man as Willie, try your best!"

Whatever may have been Mrs. Barbour's intentions in coming to Belden's Falls, she had never made them known to her relations. She settled down there as quietly as if she had always lived there, and always intended to. And though she frequently informed her niece "that she was old, and cross, and hard to live with," no one would ever have found it out for themselves. She was always thinking of some way to *help*, and if it had not been for the inconvenience of the sleeping arrangements, Mrs.

Sumner would have found her visit a great source of comfort. With regard to the new room, Mrs. Barbour had been wondering over its furnishing quite as much as the others. She saw and appreciated the effort Mr. Sumner was making to be a new man, and she knew that nothing would throw him back sooner into his old habits than being pressed by unpaid bills. She had much confidence in her niece's discretion, and felt sure that she would not do a thing which they were unable to afford. Yet she wished very much to decide two points, in order to clear away many little daily difficulties by which they were surrounded. One of these points was, whether she wished to live for the remainder of her days with Mrs. Sumner; the other, whether the Sumners would like to have her. The first question was every day settling itself more and more decidedly. She really loved the children—how could it have happened? She had thought them for years the most troublesome of all small trou-

bles, and yet, every one of these seemed to be hers. She began to have a dread of her solitary home—how could she now ever return to it? But then she could not ask to stay. She felt she might be in the way. She knew the new bedroom had been made for her. She should grow older and crosser every year. But the question must be settled; she must know what was to become of her.

"Aunt Barbour is getting homesick," said Mr. Sumner, pleasantly, one day, as the old lady, without being conscious of it, drew a deep sigh. "The next thing we know, she will disappear as suddenly as she came."

"I hope not," said Mrs. Sumner, still more kindly. "I shouldn't know how to live without Aunt Barbour, now."

"I am only," said Mrs. Barbour, the tears coming into her eyes, "old and cross—and—"

"There, aunty, you have said that often enough," said Willie, interrupting her. "You are just the best aunt that ever lived since the

world was made, and you are never to go away. If you do, Lotty and I will cry our eyes out—won't we, Lotty?" He then made Lotty understand by signs what he meant, and the child no sooner comprehended him, than she commenced a series of the most dismal cries, catching tight hold of Mrs. Barbour's dress, and patting her wrinkled face with her hand. The baby, too, seemed to think that the person whom she considered almost exclusively her property—for she was seldom out of the old aunt's lap—was in danger, for she began to crawl to her, and pulled away at her dress until she was lifted up.

"Niece Mary, and you, her husband," commenced Mrs. Barbour, after several ineffectual attempts to restrain her tears, "I am a plain, old woman; I never could make a fuss about any thing, and I never can. The long and the short of the matter is, that I should like to live with you while God lets me live. It hasn't been a pleasant thought to me, dying

all alone out there in that house of mine, and some time, perhaps a long time after I was dead, having a stranger look in, and say, 'Why, the old woman is dead at last!' I began to think a good deal about it before I came here; so, you see, I had to come, just to settle the matter whether I must die all alone, or not. God has been very good to me, and I like you all; and I should like to die here, if you ha'n't no objections. I know I am old, and cross, and— there, Willie, don't say a word. I have done; and now it is just as your father and mother say. I will go, or stay."

Mr. Sumner read his wife's wishes in her face, and promptly replied by every pleasant and kind thing which she could desire. So the matter was settled. The unexpected guest was to become the livelong inmate of the Sumner family. Willie felt rewarded already for his sacrifice. He planned how he would ask Mr. Ashton for the steady grey horse, and drive his mother into the next large town for the

new furniture; and he soon had as pleasant visions of how pleased Aunt Barbour would look when the room was completed, as he had had before of going to college, and the new scenes and life there awaiting him. This announcement on Mrs. Barbour's part made Mrs. Sumner decide to take Willie's money and spend it, as the entire good of the family seemed most to require. She therefore very willingly consented to Willie's plan for a ride. But when she told Mrs. Barbour of it, she immediately requested that the whole might be changed, and Willie be allowed to accompany her to her own home, in order to make such arrangements as should be necessary for closing it. Mr. Sumner, however, felt that it was more suitable for him to go, and as he had now more confidence in himself, he borrowed an easy wagon, and started for the second time toward the town of C——. So ended for the present Willie's plan of furnishing; for his mother could not leave home while the rest were

away, and he was glad to find that to keep his money was now rather a disappointment than a pleasure. He felt so soon the reward which always accompanies the decision to act unselfishly, with an eye to the comfort and advantage of others rather than our own. His mother, too, was satisfied with the result. She saw that Willie's trials had not been in vain, but were already bringing forth fruit.

XIII.

Sickness and Death.

AFTER three days' absence, Mr. Sumner and his aunt returned to Belden's Falls; and bringing with them, or rather rumbling along behind them, came a large wagon, well loaded with household furniture. Every want which Mrs. Barbour had noticed in the house of the Sumners, she had carefully supplied. There was her nice rag carpet, as good as new. Every thing was good, for it had been well kept; chairs, tables, bedsteads, old-fashioned linen chintz, window hangings, beds and bedding, real homespun linen sheets, bedquilts, every pattern, from the rose to the newly invented rising sun, and all so neatly made! There were old-fashioned pewter pans, which would have answered for looking-glasses, and an array of brass kettles—"real gold," Warren said, as

he passed his fingers admiringly over their shining surface, and was immediately told, "Little boys should never touch."

Never, since Mrs. Sumner was married, had she received so rich an addition to her housekeeping stores; and now, too, the question of Willie's money was at rest. Aunt Barbour would not only supply her own wants, but very largely those of the house.

Her old home had been easily rented, she refusing to sell it, though she had some good offers for it, for fear she might, after all, "have to go there to die alone." She had contrived to keep Mr. Sumner very busy, and therefore out of the way of temptation, and had planned for and with him in an adroit and thoughtful way which quite astonished him.

The money which she received for the rent of the house was to go to Mr. Sumner for her board. "So, now," she said, as the wagoner was paid, and turned his horse homeward—"so now, Niece Mary, I am come, bag and baggage,

to live with you for better or for worse. God bless us both, and help you to remember I am old, and— but there is Willie, and I don't think he likes to hear me call myself names."

And now, soon, matters in the family began to assume a settled appearance. Vacation was over, and Willie resumed his school. The long evenings for study were fast coming on. There was more talking than there used to be before Aunt Barbour came; so he often went to his own room, and, wrapped up in his knit shawl "as warm as toast," Aunt Barbour said, he used to complete his lesson; and often have time beside to look over the things in that old hair-trunk. This was a never-failing source of amusement to him. He would spend hours trying to decipher some old sermon, hoping, from every new sentence he puzzled out, to discover something, he hardly knew what,— but something which would be of great future use to him.

One day he brought James with him to look

at his pile of treasure. James laughed heartily at the small cramped hand in which they were written, and the time-stained paper. He would as soon have thought of trying to read Hindoostanee, as of attempting these. "But then, you know," he said, good-naturedly, "you mean to be a minister and write sermons. I have just as much as I want of them on Sunday. I am going to be a lawyer, and, by and by, President of the United States. When I am, you shall be my private chaplain."

Willie laughed too, but said "he should expect to be settled over some large and thriving parish by that time, who would be so much attached to him they could not possibly spare him."

James borrowed a sermon to take home to show to his father, "who," he said, "dearly loved every thing that was old and musty; every thing but an old child."

After he had left, Willie sat down again to the perusal of the sermons, or rather to turn-

ing the leaves slowly over, and to wondering whether the time would ever in truth and in reality come, in which he could write such things. It seemed like one of those dreams, those pleasant dreams, which he had so often when he was wide awake. Perhaps he began to think more of those dreams than of the manuscript, for he was suddenly wakened from his reverie by opening the leaf upon an old, very yellow stiff piece of something like paper, yet which he felt quite sure was not paper. It was neatly folded, and tied around with a bit of black tape. As he was about slipping the tape, he heard some one call him—it was his mother ; so he put every thing neatly away, and hastened down. Lotty had been hanging her head, refusing to eat, and seeming somewhat feverish for several days. Now she was sitting in her mother's lap, moaning with pain ; and Mrs. Sumner wished Willie to go at once for the doctor. Sickness, in a severe form, had never entered their home. Mrs. Sumner had

often thought it to be such a cause for true gratitude that, with trial in almost every other form, this had been spared her. But now Lotty's sickness seemed to increase with fearful rapidity. Aunt Barbour pronounced it fever, measles, small-pox, or some violent disease; and Mrs. Sumner, with her limited experience, was unable to afford the child any relief. "Willie must run quickly for good old Dr. Spofford;" and Willie did go so quickly, that almost before it seemed possible, they heard the wheels of the doctor's sulky rattling towards the house. Willie was sitting in front, on the medicine chest. The doctor never forgot to be kind to children, and had thus brought the exhausted child home.

There was no doubt what Lotty's sickness was. He immediately pronounced it scarlet fever. But the great wonder was, where the child could have taken it. She had not been away from home, where she could be exposed. But still, scarlet fever it was; and

it soon proved to be of the most virulent kind.

"There was no use now," Dr. Spofford said, "to remove the other children. It had already, before he was called, passed the stage when it was generally considered infectious; and whatever could be taken, had already been done."

There is no disease, in all the wide world, which falls upon the ear of a mother with such terror as this of scarlet fever. Looking around upon her little band of children, she feels instinctively that it is to be broken; and the one who can least be spared is always the one who is the sickest, and in the most danger of being taken. Poor helpless little Lotty! Any one of the other children could have spoken to tell her pains; but this child has lost even her dumb power of making her sufferings known, and lies there in her mother's arms, tossing her aching limbs, and moaning that heart-rending moan which only the dumb can utter.

And now, how invaluable Aunt Barbour was! How softly she moved about the house! How thoughtfully she took the children into her own bedroom; and even Warren's mischievous tricks were borne with and forgiven.

Mrs. Sumner need never leave Lotty. The child never opened her eyes, but they fell upon her mother; never moved her parched lips, but her mother's hand held the cooling drink; never moved her aching head, seeking for a fresh, cool pillow, but she turned it so gently, and with such love and tenderness, that Lotty almost forgot her pain. Willie, too, was there. He could not go to school, for fear of taking the fever among the children; so he was always near, and ready to help his mother in the thousand little attentions which sickness calls out from the thoughtful heart. No one can know with what agony the mother turned from the sick child to this boy, now so full of future promise; but in a few days, she knew, to be hovering between life and death. What

would Mrs. Sumner have done, if she had not been a Christian; if she had had to sit there through those long, weary days, when heart and flesh both failed her, with no God whom she could trust with the future of her children, and no Saviour, whose human heart had once yearned over that dead child, and whose divine power restored it to its weeping mother? For these little ones He had made a home in the kingdom of heaven. She was not afraid, now, to ask Him to take them in His arms, and blessing them, to bear them thither, if so it seemed best in His sight. She had all the comforts of religion; and what else can give any at such a time? Let Lotty's father answer, as, too anxious to go to his business at Mr. Ashton's office, too conscience-stricken to offer any aid at home, he wandered about the house, now standing for a moment beside the sick child, now trying to amuse the baby, who cried and shrunk from him, and now sitting down, moody and fretful, beside the table, with

opened but unread books in his hands. He dared not ask God for the lives of his children. What had he done for them or for God, that, after these long years of sin, he could come to Him now, and ask the greatest of all boons? "Without God," he was emphatically "without hope in the world."

The neighbors were all very kind. Those heads of families, where young children at home would be in danger, did not come much to the house; but when, in the course of a fortnight, Willie and the baby became sick, and Lotty grew every day worse and worse, Mr. Ashton assumed the responsibility of supplying the wants of the family, and sent a strong, capable nurse to assist them.

Willie occupied the new bedroom, Aunt Barbour having forgotten, in her anxiety, that she had not "slept up stairs for fifty years," and of her own accord exchanged rooms with him. And the baby in its little crib, by Lotty's side, would be tended by no one but its own mother.

Willie was never so sick, and never so thoughtful before. He asked to have the door opened into the room where his mother and the children were, and contented himself, lying there, following his mother wistfully with his eyes, and trying to smile every time he saw her worn, anxious face turned towards him.

We will not follow the family through these protracted days of sickness and suffering. There came a night—a still, dark night—when there fell upon the house the hush which attends the coming of the angels. No one heard their approach, no one saw them enter the dwelling, yet all but Willie knew that they were there. Dear little Lotty! it hardly seems as if that can be you, lying there so pale and wan. You have suffered—how much you could never tell, and no one, not even your mother, can ever know. But these angels are waiting, and there is rest for you now. You have never heard before. But listen! No one else can perceive the soft rustling of those

downy wings, but you can, and you smile. The new sense is the first dawning of the new life! Listen, still, again! Those bright messengers are near you now; they are bending over you; they raise you gently, so gently, and—yes, you hear it all: it is the song of those little ones, who are coming forth to meet, and welcome you to that beautiful heavenly home. Not one sound of earthly music, not even your mother's lullaby, has ever fallen on your ears, but yet you recognize these strains. They have breathed before through the solemn silence of your being, which God Himself had made. And the first words you have ever uttered shall be those of that new song, 'Worthy is the Lamb which was slain.' Blessed Saviour! the angels have borne her to you, and you have taken our stricken child: no longer stricken, but enfolded in your arms, and blessed.

"Willie," said his mother, coming softly into his room, as the day began to dawn, and laying her head down upon his pillow, "should

you not be very happy if you thought that God had given to Lotty the power of hearing and speaking?"

Willie turned his heavy eyes one moment on his mother's face. He knew it all, and he said quietly, "Mother, Lotty is in heaven!"

At noon of that day, a loud deep groan broke from the room into which they had borne the dead child. It startled all the weary watchers in the house. Willie heard it, in the half-feverish sleep into which he had fallen, and never could forget it. Mrs. Sumner recognized it, and buried her face in her hands. It was wrung from the heart of the father, who, standing beside the cold body of his helpless child, remembered, oh! so vividly, as nothing but a guilty conscience can make possible, the day when he had struck her; when he had seen the blood stream down upon her white neck; when he had driven her out into the cold, pitiless winter air. "Without God, without hope!" miserable man, no words can

tell what he must suffer now, with what heart-rending anguish he stands beside that little grave, and feels that the sods, which are so soon to cover it, shut out all hope of reparation. No kindness can reach her now. He may be a changed, a Christian man, and to the remaining children a kind and tender father. But no loving word can this sleeper hear; nothing to leave with her there but this memory of hardships, suffered from his neglect; of cruelties borne, of which she could never make complaint. These voices, speaking back to us from what would otherwise be a silent land, utter words which must be heard. And well it were for the living if this remembrance could be oftener present, hushing the unkind word, and changing into a kindness the unkind act.

Soon after Lotty's death, Willie's sickest days came—days when his mother counted the hours, feeling that every one was bearing away her precious boy; when, as she sat so silent

and watchful by his bed, and saw him grow thinner and paler, she remembered often her visit that moonlight night to his side, and how even then she felt that the shadows which had fallen was hanging over them. Willie's mind wandered now, as it had so often in health, to his future minister life; and one of the most frequent half-uttered ejaculations which fell from his lips, were the words, "Here am I, for thou didst call me."

So certain were all his friends that Willie's days were numbered, that no one thought of speaking a word of encouragement to his mother. And the prayer of those who loved him best was not so much for life, as that Jesus would lead him gently and tenderly through the dark valley and shadow; that he might be spared the lingering hours of intense suffering through which the deaf and dumb child had passed to her long rest. But God had work still for Willie to do, and had otherwise decreed. The violent symptoms abated, the

fever gave way, and good Doctor Spofford, with tears of joy standing in his eyes, whispered one morning to Willie's mother, that unless something he could not foresee should occur, there was hope for her boy. The first consciousness of returning life which he himself had, was holding in his hand a beautiful bunch of flowers, and of being told that Lina had sent them to him. From this time he rapidly convalesced; and in little less than a month from the day Lotty had been laid in her last home, he began to sit by the window and watch the snow-flakes, as they piled themselves one upon another all around the sill, or listen for James to come, on his way to or from school, with Lina; and sometimes, too, to look for Jerry, who, although pretty constantly at work in the mill, used to improve every opportunity to come and inquire for Willie, bringing with him always some little gift, something to show he was a grateful boy. One day, it might be a bright bit of calico;

another a rude whistle, which he fashioned in his leisure from work hours ; and once, a tiny sled, quite perfect, considering the workman, with a bit of twine for rope, and stripes from the calico to answer for borders of paint.

Mrs. Ashton had now the opportunity she had so long desired, to do something which would really assist the family. Every day she made some little delicacy, and sent there. She could make new warm clothes for the baby, under the excuse that it was left so delicate by the fever that it needed extra warmth, and its mother was too worn and occupied to attend to such little things. Then, Aunt Barbour was very old, and this sickness had somewhat shaken her of late, so her cook must work for a short time for both families, and no need to do much in that line at Mr. Sumner's until all were well again.

James was her constant messenger, and the boy as much delighted in his errands of

"And once a tiny sled."

Win and Wear. p. 264.

mercy, as his good mother in sending him upon them. Thus God, in the beautiful economy of our human life, orders it that the afflictions He sends shall do extensive good. He sends them to call out the nobler principles of our nature, to make us unselfish, to help us to obey that higher law of "loving our neighbor as ourselves."

Many people in Belden's Falls said, "Poor Mrs. Sumner! it seems so strange such a meek, good little woman as she is should be called to bear so many trials!" If there was a family in town to whom property would do good, it was evidently the Sumner family. But God knew what was best, and Mrs. Sumner felt sure that He acted only from the kindest love and the most unerring wisdom. Perhaps this was just what was needed to complete Mr. Sumner's reformation. Lotty was the dearest of his children to him, the one who had been most constantly the tender tie which would, for a brief space, sometimes arrest his downward

way. No other death, excepting that of his wife, would have affected him so sensibly. God knew this, and who can say that He did not direct accordingly? From the time of Lotty's death, every one felt how altered a man Mr. Sumner was; and no one was more fully conscious of it than Lotty's mother, who never forgot, while she prayed that the child's loss might be blessed to her, to return thanks that this loss had also been to her the occasion of an unspeakable gain.

Willie, as most delicate children do, took a long time, after the danger was past, to recover his usual strength. He seemed, to his mother, to be going into a decline. He was gentle and quiet, showing little interest in things around him, and speaking of Lotty often, as if he expected to meet her again after a very few days. The first real desire which he evinced for occupation, was shown by a request to his mother to bring down from up stairs the favorite pile of sermons. "Queer play-

things for a sick child," his mother said, but was nevertheless very willing to gratify him. Lying on the top of the first pile was a paper on which he had written his favorite motto, "Win and Wear." This his mother brought down too, and his whole face lighted up with delight, as he saw it. Willie was evidently getting better: the words recalled some of his old ambition, his desire to learn, his wish to be useful, to be great, and good.

"Mother," he said, after he had looked at it in silence for some time, "Mr. Ross said there was hardly a situation in life to which we could not apply this motto with truth and utility. I should like to know how we could to sickness, to scarlet fever. I have been trying to puzzle it out, but I can't make much of it."

Mrs. Sumner hesitated a moment; but the uses of affliction were grown familiar to her, so she said, "Willie, think a little while. What has your sickness done for you—for your character, I mean?"

"I don't know mother," answered he, after a few moments' reflection; "I think I am much more fretful than I used to be, more easily vexed, more indolent and selfish; but that is not what you mean, I am sure."

"No, my boy; you are not yet strong, and I think can hardly judge for yourself. I will tell you what I hope will be the effect, by and by. That you will be more gentle, more patient, more industrious, more thoughtful for others, and more anxious to dedicate the life which God has spared to His service. You can be and do all these things if you really and earnestly try; in other words, if you would wear, or possess all the benefits which ought to result from affliction, you must *win* them, by resolutely setting about attaining them."

"I understand you, mother; but somehow this 'Win and Wear' seems rather to apply to—to—almost every thing but moral traits."

"You are mistaken, Willie; the longer you

live, and the more closely you observe, the more certain you will be that it applies to nothing so forcibly as to feelings. You as surely must wear what you win here, whether it is good or bad, as you must be content to take that place in society which you earn by your conduct."

Willie looked puzzled. His mother thought he would work his way to this truth if left to his own reflections; she therefore busied herself about something else, and Willie commenced his search through the old sermons. The second one he opened contained the yellow thick paper, tied with a black tape, which had attracted his attention before. He took it out and carefully laid it aside, intending to ask his father about it when he should return from the mill. Warren was attracted by its odd look, and wanted it for a plaything, but got only a sharp rebuke for meddling from Aunt Barbour. But no sooner was his father in the house than Warren laid the whole of his griev-

ance before him, for he had already learned from whom now to expect the greatest indulgence.

Mr. Sumner took the paper, looked at it carelessly, and slowly untied the tape; but no sooner had his eye fallen upon the first line, than his expression changed, and his attention was riveted in a moment.

"It is it! it is it!" he said at last, having read and re-read it several times. "Aunt Barbour—Mary! here is the will, your grandfather's will, entire and complete in all its forms, and settling now and forever the question of the mill lands!"

Aunt Barbour dropped her knitting as if her hands had been suddenly struck with palsy. Not one word could she utter in reply, not a single question suggested itself to her to be asked. Even Mrs. Sumner seemed struck dumb. Adversity she could bear, but prosperity found her all unprepared, and at a single glance she seemed to take in a smiling future.

"Where did this come from, Willie?" asked his father, after rather mechanically, than with any purpose, reading the will over again aloud. Willie explained it all, and told how, months ago, on the very day upon which the doctor came to Lotty, he had found, and wondered over it, intending to ask his father about it; but the events since had entirely put it out of his mind.

The will—that of Mrs. Barbour's father—proved Mrs. Barbour to have been in the right so far as concerned the disputed land. But it also proved what, until now she had entirely forgotten, that her real estate covered a much greater extent of land, and that she had been originally the owner of most of that upon which the thriving village of Belden's Falls now stood. This gave a very different turn to affairs. If she should claim all that rightfully belonged to her, what was to become of those who, having purchased the property from other hands, had the right of possession?

Mr. Sumner, in true lawyer style, briefly stated these points as they discussed the will. How much was involved! It added another look of care and anxiety to that already written upon Mr. Sumner's face, and it sent Aunt Barbour to bed that night, not to close her eyes, but to wonder over that mysterious Providence which, after so many years of lonely struggle and poverty, now, in her old age, when for the first time she had a prospect of being loved and cared for, had sent her a fortune which promised to be by no means small. Mrs. Sumner's heart was at rest. Willie's darling object was surely now gained. What could, as she was the next heir, prevent him from attaining an education? And, delicate as he was, how much he needed the help! Willie knew nothing of all this; but, in a tired sleep that night, saw countless old sermons and wakened weary from his effort to read them all.

XIII.

Aunt Barbour.

WHAT can have happened to Aunt Barbour? From the night of the discovery of the will she has been a changed woman. She used to be very correct; her step was firm, and her hand steady. She heard as readily as if she was only fifty, instead of seventy; and where the light fell strongly upon her large Bible, Willie had often seen her reading without the aid of her spectacles. But now she begins to stoop, as if there were a weight upon her shoulders which was bearing her down. There is constant motion among the narrow white ribbons of her cap. The baby is very fond of her, and thinks she is making them dance to give her pleasure; so she laughs, and holds up her little fingers in a vain attempt to catch and hold them still. And when Aunt

Barbour spills the milk with which she is endeavoring to feed her, she shakes her pretty curls at her, and wonders in her young heart why that face, that always had a smile for her before, looks so solemn now! You must call loud, or Aunt Barbour cannot hear you. The family learn this slowly, for the change has come suddenly, and no one was prepared for it. And then, if the spectacles are mislaid, what a stir is made to find them, and how Warren is accused of having taken and lost them, receiving from his irritated relative many little slaps which nobody else sees.

Mrs. Sumner at length becomes convinced that something is the matter with her aunt, and mentions it to her husband, who also notices it, and says, "The sudden change of fortune was too much for the old lady; it will probably be the death of her." And then Mrs. Sumner begins to be doubly kind and attentive, trying to take back the care which she had so gladly transferred to her aunt; but from this

there arises new trouble, for Aunt Barbour grows daily crabbed and cross. She finds a great deal of fault about little things. She will wash the dishes, and build the fires, but she drops the crockery and breaks it with a crash; and once, but for Willie's timely efforts, might have been burned to death, for the fire caught the corner of her old calico apron, and blazed up in an instant. Willie's hands are both burned, one quite badly; but he has saved his aunt from injury, and he hides them in his pocket until the smart is over, trying all the time to bear the pain like a man. Aunt Barbour never so much as thanks him for what he has done. To be sure she does not seem to know about the burnt hands; she only appears angry to find she has lost her apron, and thinks of nothing else. She sits alone, a great deal, in her small bedroom: it is too cold for her, but she resents every attempt to make her comfortable, and she is carefully gathering all her possessions, which she had scattered about

the house, into her own room. One day Mrs. Sumner hears her hammering, and when she goes to her, finds her busy driving nails over her one window, so that it could not be raised from without. She has a large rope, too, which at night she ties around the door-handle, and then sleeps with the ends in her hands.

She never has a light when she goes to bed. She has stopped reading her Bible now, before she puts her head upon her pillow, and she sometimes forgets to pray. Poor Aunt Barbour! the grasshopper has indeed become a burden. How will it all end?

Weeks seem to be doing for her now the work of years. Mrs. Sumner hints to her that she thinks she is very feeble, and wishes to send for Dr. Spofford; but she dares never propose it again, for she receives in answer a perfect torrent of abuse, every sentence ending with the threat, if she dies, to leave her money to some one else.

It is in vain Mrs. Sumner assures her that

the advice she gives has no reference to the money. She is obstinate, and becomes at last so sensitive, that every kindness assumes to her failing mind the form of an effort to coax from her what she will soon possess.

In her helpless old age she has become a miser. Mr. Sumner was right. The shock of the good fortune was too much: both mind and body are giving away beneath it.

The children, with that intuitive perception that something is wrong which belongs to the young, learn soon to be quiet when she comes out of her room; to avoid her, when they can. Even the baby creeps away, and hides behind her mother's chair. Aunt Barbour is so self-absorbed that she does not notice this at all, and what would she care now if she did? Willie is old enough to be patient, gentle, thoughtful, and so he tries sometimes to be; but Willie is not perfect, and he often feels the hot temper rush up into his face when she answers his mother sharply. One day Aunt

Barbour calls him into her room; she has something to say which she wishes no one else to hear. Willie really trembles as he stands there alone with her, for she takes hold of his shoulder with such a tight grasp; and her eye is very bright and searching when she fixes it upon him. "Willie Sumner," she says, authoritatively, "you put your cap right on, and go up to Mr. Ashton's. Tell him I want him to send his Jem and wagon right down here after dinner, to give me a lift."

"Give you a lift?" repeated Willie, not at all assured by the strange request.

"Yes, give me a lift," said the old woman, shaking him. "You a'n't deaf, are you? And mind, you go right up without telling your folks, any of them, one word about it."

"I can't do that," said Willie resolutely, recovering a little from his fright. "I never go away without asking my mother if I may, and I can't do it now."

There was evidently a struggle for a moment

in aunt Barbour's heart, for she loosened her hold, and a soft expression came over her face; but it was only for an instant.

"I'd be a gal, and done with it," she said, scornfully. "Go, poor little thing, and tell your mother all about it, but don't come nigh me again," saying which, she opened the door and pushed the boy out. Willie went immediately to his mother, and told her all. Mrs. Sumner thought, considering the circumstances, it was best that her aunt should be gratified, and directed Willie to do precisely as she had requested.

Mr. Ashton, who had been kept fully informed of the state of events at Mr. Sumner's, readily consented to gratify the old lady. James was kept from school that very afternoon, and sent at one o'clock with an easy wagon, to do Aunt Barbour's bidding, whatever it should be.

Mrs. Barbour was so delighted to do as she wished, that she seemed to have forgotten that its proposal had been attended by any un-

pleasant circumstance. She looked more like her former self than she had for weeks, as she stepped into the carriage and whispered to James where she wished to go. James snapped his whip, and the horse trotted off at a full round trot. It was well for Mrs. Barbour that Mr. Ashton had been so thoughtful about the easy carriage.

Just after dark they returned. Aunt Barbour looked very weary; and Mrs. Sumner noticed that her steps tottered considerably, as she came to the fire, but for fear of offending she did not offer to assist her. Not an inquiry was made as to where she had been, or for what object, and that night the family all lay down to sleep as quietly as if no unusual event was about to take place. The next morning breakfast passed, and Mrs. Barbour did not make her appearance. This was very unusual. But her niece attributed it to the fatigue naturally consequent upon a ride, in her aunt's enfeebled condition; and it was not until Mr.

Sumner had been for some time gone to the mill, that at last she ventured to go to her door and knock gently. Hearing no reply, she knocked still louder; but all was still. Alarmed at the continued quiet, she endeavored to open the door. At first there was a slight resistance, but it gradually yielded; and as she lifted the latch, the rope was slowly drawn out, and fell heavily upon the floor. The sound of the fall startled Mrs. Sumner, and, waiting no longer for leave to enter, she stepped quickly in. Mrs. Barbour lay in her bed, one hand over the counterpane, from which the rope had evidently just fallen; the other was under the pillow, which, raised a little by the hand, half hid the old lady's face. But Mrs. Sumner's first glance told her that over those sharp, pinched features the hand of death had passed, and that, coming silently, like the thief in the night, no nailed window or fastened door could prevent his entrance. Aunt Barbour had gone with him, had left all earthly treasures for those

which in other days she had laid up where moth and rust cannot corrupt, or thieves break through and steal.

Willie was immediately sent for his father; and the dreaded coroner's inquest, soon sitting over the dead body, pronounced the solemn verdict, "Died by a visitation from God."

In the hand which was under the pillow, was found, tightly clasped, the last will and testament of Mrs. Barbour. It had been drawn up on the afternoon previous to her death, and had been the object of her ride.

Perhaps she had had intimation, which she imparted to no one, that her end was near, and had therefore hastened to express her wish in a sure legal way with regard to her property. Perhaps the long cold drive had hastened on the event which otherwise could not have been far distant. The funeral, after due time, was respectfully attended by most of the inhabitants of Belden's Falls; and old Mrs. Barbour was laid to her final rest by the

side of her brother, and not far from the spot to which, so few months before, they had borne little Lotty.

The night after the funeral, Mr. Sumner deemed it proper to open the will; now, by the late accession of property, become quite a thing of importance. It was drawn in common form, leaving the small house, which she formerly occupied, with all her household furniture and personal wearing apparel, to her beloved niece, Mary Loring Sumner; but every thing else, which did pertain, or might hereafter pertain to her, either as real estate or money, to her most dearly beloved great nephew, William Loring Sumner.

"This she wished," so ran the will, "him to possess, in part as a proof of her affection for him, and in part as a proof of her gratitude for the many little kind acts which he had performed towards her, wishing to make special mention of the late occasion upon which, to save her old life, he had risked his own."

She expressed, in language which must have been her own, the hope that "he would possess as many thousand dollars as he had incurred blisters on his hands on her account."

Our story now draws rapidly to its conclusion. We shall detain the readers for but a few pages more.

Mr. and Mrs. Sumner deemed it prudent to keep Willie in ignorance of the great good fortune that had befallen him. "He will make a better and a truer man to exert himself just as far as his strength and health will allow," said his wise mother. "He shall feel that his education will no longer be impossible, or accomplished with sacrifices on our part; but further than that will not be for his future good."

Mr. Sumner perfectly agreed with her, and they therefore resolved, with the exception of Mr. Ashton, to make the will known to no one. The amount of property could not be settled until after a prolonged litigation, so that nothing was of course definitely known.

And therefore the registry in the Probate Court was conducted privately and quietly.

Willie could now, in all probability, have been sent away from Belden's Falls to some famous academy in which to complete his fitting for college; but his parents had the good sense to be satisfied with "well enough," and to know that there is no place in the wide world so good for the entire and symmetrical development of a boy, as at home under the watchful eye of judicious parents. So Willie and James passed their preparatory years together, growing to love one another more and more, as time sped on; and, entering the same college, they became roommates,—Willie, with his high principles and his deep seated religious faith, keeping steady James's warm and more impulsive nature; and James, with the genial glow of a happy, generous heart, throwing such a warm, glad light all around the arduous, and oftentimes difficult path of study. Thus Willie forgot, in its brightness, many

weary hours—hours when the memory of those early days of suffering and want was forced upon him by the trembling nerves and often failing strength which he had then fastened upon him for life.

But what of Willie's purposes for the future? Have we lost our minister boy? By no means. Willie does not read his grandfather's old sermons any longer, for he is looking forward soon to writing them for himself.

Early and late, in season and out of season, waking with him when he opens his eyes in the morning, and blending with his dreams at night, come back to the young man the boy's fond wishes. And the goal is now nearly reached. He is *winning* the prize. We cannot refrain from a few words in a parting chapter, to say how he *wears* it.

XIV.

The Conclusion.

THE same bell which, in our opening chapter, the crowd of little listeners were waiting to hear chime the hour of noon, now sends forth from the church belfry in Belden's Falls its slow inviting notes. It is a beautiful Sunday morning in June. The fresh green leaves glisten in the bright summer sun, and bend their tender heads at the touch of the soft breeze, as if conscious it had been sent to make them assume the attitude of worshippers Every little hillock is gay with early flowers, and the very air is laden with the breath of nature's sweetest incense—its offering upon God's altar—purer and more fragrant than the myrrh and frankincense which ascended at His command from the temples made with hands. Brooding over the whole, with that ineffable

charm which a low, musical sound can alone impart to a scene, was heard the dash of the endless water, as, rejoicing like every thing else to have its six days' work done, it was rushing and tumbling over the smooth rocks, sending up its spray, glowing like God's rainbow, and so audibly and visibly offering up its Sabbath hymn.

Groups of well-dressed people began to wend their way toward the church at the call of the bell. Those accustomed to read the faces of these quiet inhabitants could readily discern that there was some object to-day of unusual interest; something which had waked to a quicker beat the somewhat regular motion of their hearts.

There was a little the look of a holiday, though all was perfectly quiet and sedate, as became holy hours. Every body has come out. There is old Mrs. Judkins. She has never been in church, so severe has been her rheumatism, since the minister, Mr. Loring, died.

But she has her crutch to-day, and Deacon Webb has stopped at her door, with his two-horse wagon, to give her a ride. See! he helps her as tenderly up those steps, as if she were his own aged mother; and once more, before she is "borne in," the old lady shall come near the mercy-seat which is placed in the sanctuary.

John Dobey, wicked, forsaken being that he is, with so many years between him and the time when he sat there before, has come up now, because he has had an invitation from the young squire. God may have been waiting there for him all these long years, and will meet him here to-day. Those who have been too busy to attend church, and those who have been too idle, are on their way to-day; and all the time the bells ring on steadily, clearly, as all our calls come from God, if we would but listen.

Before the bell tolls, the church is filled. Who ever remembers to have seen so great a crowd there before? Around the porch, out

upon the steps, sitting on the posts which surround the churchyard, are young men and boys, and all look in one direction; they are intent upon seeing the same thing. Pretty soon there is a stir among them; the smallest boys run forward up the road, then return to hide themselves behind some corner of the yard.

"They are coming!" Many repeat it, but softly! for it is the Lord's day. Presently an open wagon, drawn by squire Ashton's two bay horses, with the young squire himself driving, comes in sight, followed by another covered carriage.

"They are all together," says some one, and the excitement is at its height; but so quiet and respectful, that but for one or two stepping forward to hold the horses' heads as they stop, no one could perceive any thing unusual in the crowd.

James Ashton—now, as our readers will have surmised, the young squire, or "square," as the

people called him—is just as handsome, just as happy, and just as good as when he was a boy. Every body loves him. He is generous, noble, and thoughtful for the poor. He does not live in Belden's Falls; but he comes home so often from his office in the city, that all the inhabitants feel as if he belonged to them. He is their son, or their brother, or their dearest friend. They have a special claim upon him, as if, by some peculiar freak of nature, he was a blood relation of them all. He remembers it is Sunday; but it takes all the self-control of which he is master, to keep down the merry, hearty welcome which rises to his lips as naturally as his very breath, when he sees so many dear, familiar faces. He tries to look, not grave, but befittingly sober, as he hands out first his mother, over whose face lies a deep, quiet light, like that of the stars; then the young people, his half-grown brothers and sisters; and then his father, who has, though he thinks no one suspects it, stayed on his seat

hoping to conquer the emotion which wells up so freshly as he recalls the past. But his turn has come, and he conceals what he feels by giving the minutest directions about the horses.

But who is in this covered carriage? Some one who is very welcome; for, in spite of the day, and the good resolutions, it is immediately surrounded by the watching crowd. What a shaking of hands! Will it ever cease? for they go first to the front, then to the back seat; and their pleased faces show that they find a very cordial reception.

The bell keeps on tolling, tolling. The sexton is evidently growing weary; so the carriage door is opened, and Mrs. Sumner, with her pale but still beautiful face, is almost helped out. There is a shrinking timidity in her whole bearing. But Willie is now by her side; he has put her arm within his, and she feels that it is hers alone that trembles; his is firm and strong. How quickly it gives her courage! There is something in a touch oftentimes more

eloquent than words. Willie gives one glance over his shoulder at a young, beautiful girl, with eyes so blue that it almost seems as if the sky were sleeping there. It is a demure little face, schooling itself to hide away the joy and happiness, far, far out of sight, down in the depths of its own heart; but it is too full, it is running over, and looking through that sky, as the stars look out on a cloudless night. Not even the plain dress, and the neat bonnet, trimmed only with a simple white ribbon, can make the graceful, lifeful thing bear herself with the sober dignity becoming a minister's wife. She feels it all, and a shy consciousness gives her a half-meek, half-beseeching air, which, if she only knew it, makes her much more charming.

"Lina," Willie whispers, as he drops a moment behind his mother, on the church steps, "sit next to father, in church, he will be so proud of you." And so they file in. Willie and his mother. Mr. Sumner, grown

old, but bearing with his years marks of sobriety, intelligence, and "the well to do in the world" look, which shows itself so clearly if success attends middle life. Willie is "proud" of his father now, and has good reason to be. With him comes Lina, not Lina Ashton any longer, but Lina Sumner now.

Perhaps, as she takes her seat in church, she remembers how, when they were children, she had to lose her place because her husband at the examination gave her too difficult a word. Perhaps she is going back over all these years, and wondering that she did not know how much they loved each other even then.

Now comes Warren—Mr. Ashton's head man in the care of his extensive factory business—stout and manly. Neither care nor study has left a mark upon his face; but he is a man for all that, and one of these days shall make good Mr. Ashton's place. And with him comes "the baby." What a large child she has grown to be! She is larger now than Lotty was when

they missed her from among them; but she has a look so much like the dead child in her face, and in her winning, pretty ways, that her mother often wonders if this is not a kind gift of God to lighten the sadness which falls upon her heart, whenever she thinks of her deaf and dumb child.

Willie waits to close softly the door of the pew; then, calm and self-possessed, as if in his errand he had forgotten the peculiar circumstances by which he is surrounded, ascends the pulpit stairs, and seats himself beside the minister. Mr. Ross feels like a father to this "lamb of his flock." He cannot forget him; and, rising to make the opening prayer, he leaves not a dry eye in the church, as he thanks his God that he has been spared to offer to Him anew this young servant. And now that he was old and grey-headed, he wished to place upon his shoulders the consecrated mantle which had been anointed with oil from on high.

Willie—or, as we must now call him, the

Reverend William Sumner—followed the prayer by reading a hymn. His voice may have faltered at first, but true feeling is deep and strong, and his dear familiar tones reached even to the hearts of the most careless hearer there. We cannot do justice to his sermon, therefore we leave him here.

This was to be for the future *his* people, and he knew that he must bring to them "apples of gold in pictures of silver."

Mr. Lane stood waiting for him at the foot of the stairs as he went down. Not a word did he trust himself to say, but he grasped the hand of his old pupil, which told of hopes most brightly fulfilled.

And yet one other person stood at the door, watching for his chance.

It is a great burly Irishman; and his nice dress, and the easy smile upon his pleasant intelligent face, show that he feels he has a claim to be welcomed.

"Ah! Jerry, I am very glad to see you,"

said the young minister, with a cordial shake of the hand; "I shall depend upon you for aid in my Sunday-school!"

"And I will help you, Mr. Sumner," said the rough man, "as faithfully and as patiently as you taught me to paste on cards of calico."

And now, what of Aunt Barbour's fortune? If any of my readers care much to know, they do more than Willie did.

Mr. Sumner found that to follow out the claims of the will would ruin many a poor family, and bring much distress into the village of Belden's Falls, so he sold the land at a fair price to Mr. Ashton, and received beside a regular rent for the land which the mill already covered.

This he was unwilling to do, but Mr. Ashton would take no denial.

When Willie was of age the whole matter was stated to him, and he agreed fully with his father as to the true justice and propriety of the course he had taken. So now he came

to Belden's Falls and settled down among his people with a clean hand and an open heart.

Poverty and suffering had not crushed him. Ambition had not spoiled him, for his was a holy ambition to make his one talent *ten* for his Master's use.

Prosperity and wealth were valued as means to accomplish the one great end. Truly Willie Sumner has WON; he has now the right to WEAR.

THE END.

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